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to quote:

ARTHUR C. CLARKE



"I have been interested in space travel ever since I can remember—said interest predated my joining the British Interplanetary Society at the age of sixteen. My gods, at the time, were, of course, Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. To a great extent, they still are. To me, the most fascinating object imaginable was the moon on a clear night. It still is. I became an auditor at nineteen, recovered—fortunately—from this debacle, and looked again into the sky. Discovered photography and found more happiness. I now write fiction, radio and TV shows, and fact articles on space."

HARRIET FRANK, JR.



"I was born less than—well, thirty years ago, with no idea, at the time, of becoming a writer. Fortunate. My parents would probably have been scared to death. Later I hit it with everything I had. Became a writer, and married one. The male member of the team, at least outwardly, resembles nothing out of Mickey Spillane. We are now living in Los Angeles. I have many enthusiasms. Starting with my husband and Los Angeles, they go on to travel, foreign places, children, animals, Jane Austen, cooking, beautiful sunsets and U.S. currency."

CURTIS W. CASEWIT



"I was born in Germany. Studied languages in Switzerland, art in France. I've been a newspaperman in Austria, traveled in Africa, was a guide in Italy, showing tourists around the spots of interest. I came to America in '48 and analyzed handwriting in Coney Island for want of something better to do. Tried selling liquor and was amazed to find I didn't need a passport to get into Nebraska. Went further west and discovered the gold mines of Hollywood. I found no gold in the streets. Had to go into the studios after it. I didn't mind."

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ENCOUNTER IN THE DAWN

By ARTHUR C. CLARKE

A lot of glib fiction has been written about life on other planets, with space ships dropping down among alien races, zap guns decimating the enemy, while Our Hero goes batting off after a Beautiful Princess, who is about to be ravaged by the hairy-nosed glumpfx of Pluto.

But Mr. Clarke, whose book, Exploration of Space, was a Book-of-the-Month choice, takes the realistic approach and gets better results than anything by the boom-boom boys.



IT was in the last days of the Empire. The tiny ship was far from home, and almost a hundred light-years from the great parent vessel searching through the loosely packed stars at the rim of the Milky Way. But even here it could not escape from the shadow that lay across civilization: beneath that shadow, pausing ever and again in their work to wonder how their distant homes were

faring, the scientists of the Galactic Survey still labored at their never-ending task.

The ship held only three occupants, but between them they carried knowledge of many sciences, and the experience of half a lifetime in space. After the long interstellar night, the star ahead was warming their spirits as they dropped down towards its fires. A little more golden, a trifle more

brilliant than the sun that now seemed a legend of their childhood. They knew from past experience that the chance of locating planets here was more than ninety per cent, and for the moment they forgot all else in the excitement of discovery.

They found the first planet within minutes of coming to rest. It was a giant, of a familiar type, too cold for protoplasmic life and probably possessing no stable surface. So they turned their search sunwards, and presently were rewarded.

It was a world that made their hearts ache for home, a world where everything was hauntingly familiar, yet never quite the same. Two great land masses floated in blue-green seas, capped by ice at either pole. There were some desert regions, but the larger part of the planet was obviously fertile. Even from this distance, the signs of vegetation were unmistakably clear.

They gazed hungrily at the expanding landscape as they fell down into the atmosphere, heading towards noon in the subtropics. The ship plummeted through cloudless skies towards a great river, checked its fall with a surge of soundless power, and came to rest among the long grasses by the water's edge.

No one moved: there was nothing to be done until the automatic instruments had finished their

work. Then a bell tinkled softly and the lights on the control board flashed in a pattern of meaningful chaos. Captain Altman rose to his feet with a sigh of relief.

"We're in luck," he said. "We can go outside without protection, if the pathogenic tests are satisfactory. What did you make of the place as we came in, Bertrond?"

"Geologically stable — no active volcanoes, at least. I didn't see any trace of cities, but that proves nothing. If there's a civilization here, it may have passed that stage."

"Or not reached it yet?"

Bertrond shrugged. "Either's just as likely. It may take us some time to find out on a planet this size."

"More time than we've got," said Clindar, glancing at the communications panel that linked them to the mother ship and thence to the Galaxy's threatened heart. For a moment there was a gloomy silence. Then Clindar walked to the control board and pressed a pattern of keys with automatic skill.

With a slight jar, a section of the hull slid aside and the fourth member of the crew stepped out onto the new planet, flexing metal limbs and adjusting servo motors to the unaccustomed gravity. Inside the ship, a television screen glimmered into life, revealing a long vista of waving grasses, some

trees in the middle distance, and a glimpse of the great river. Clindar punched a button, and the picture flowed steadily across the screen as the robot turned its head.

"Which way shall we go?" Clindar asked.

"Let's have a look at those trees," Altman replied. "If there's any animal life we'll find it there."

"Look!" cried Bertrond. "A bird!"

Clindar's fingers flew over the keyboard: the picture centred on the tiny speck that had suddenly appeared on the left of the screen, and expanded rapidly as the robot's telephoto lens came into action.

"You're right," he said. "Feathers — beak — well up the evolutionary ladder. This place looks promising. I'll start the camera."

The swaying motion of the picture as the robot walked forward did not distract them: they had grown accustomed to it long ago. But they had never become reconciled to this exploration by proxy when all their impulses cried out to them to leave the ship, to run through the grass and to feel the wind blowing against their faces. Yet it was too great a risk to take, even on a world that seemed as fair as this. There was always a skull hidden behind Nature's most smiling face. Wild beasts, poisonous reptiles, quagmires — death

could come to the unwary explorer in a thousand disguises. And worst of all were the invisible enemies, the bacteria and viruses against which the only defense might often be a thousand light-years away.

A robot could laugh at all these dangers and even if, as sometimes happened, it encountered a beast powerful enough to destroy it — well, machines could always be replaced.

They met nothing on the walk across the grasslands. If any small animals were disturbed by the robot's passage, they kept outside its field of vision. Clindar slowed the machine as it approached the trees, and the watchers in the spaceship flinched involuntarily at the branches that appeared to slash across their eyes. The picture dimmed for a moment before the controls readjusted themselves to the weaker illumination; then it came back to normal.

The forest was full of life. It lurked in the undergrowth, clambered among the branches, flew through the air. It fled chattering and gibbering through the trees as the robot advanced. And all the while the automatic cameras were recording the pictures that formed on the screen, gathering material for the biologists to analyze when the ship returned to base.

Clindar breathed a sigh of relief when the trees suddenly thinned. It was exhausting work, keeping

the robot from smashing into obstacles as it moved through the forest, but on open ground it could take care of itself. Then the picture trembled as if beneath a hammer-blow, there was a grinding metallic thud, and the whole scene swept vertiginously upwards as the robot toppled and fell.

"What's that?" cried Altman. "Did you trip?"

"No," said Clindar grimly, his fingers flying over the keyboard. "Something attacked from the rear. I hope . . . ah . . . I've still got control."

He brought the robot to a sitting position and swivelled its head. It did not take long to find the cause of the trouble. Standing a few feet away, and lashing its tail angrily, was a large quadruped with a most ferocious set of teeth. At the moment it was, fairly obviously, trying to decide whether to attack again.

Slowly, the robot rose to its feet, and as it did so the great beast crouched to spring. A smile flitted across Clindar's face: he knew how to deal with this situation. His thumb felt for the seldom-used key labelled "Siren".

The forest echoed with a hideous undulating scream from the robot's concealed speaker, and the machine advanced to meet its adversary, arms flailing in front of it. The startled beast almost fell over backwards in its effort to

turn, and in seconds was gone from sight.

"Now I suppose we'll have to wait a couple of hours until everything comes out of hiding again," said Bertrond ruefully.

"I don't know much about animal psychology," interjected Altman, "but is it usual for them to attack something completely unfamiliar?"

"Some will attack anything that moves, but that's unusual. Normally they only attack for food, or if they've already been threatened. What are you driving at? Do you suggest that there are other robots on this planet?"

"Certainly not. But our carnivorous friend may have mistaken our machine for a more edible biped. Don't you think that this opening in the jungle is rather unnatural? It could easily be a path."

"In that case," said Clindar promptly, "we'll follow it and find out. I'm tired of dodging trees, but I hope nothing jumps on us again: it's bad for my nerves."

"You were right, Altman," said Bertrond a little later. "It's certainly a path. But that doesn't mean intelligence. After all, animals —"

He stopped in mid-sentence, and at the same instant Clindar brought the advancing robot to a halt. The path had suddenly opened out into a wide clearing, almost completely occupied by a

village of flimsy huts. It was ringed by a wooden palisade, obviously defense against an enemy who at the moment presented no threat. For the gates were wide open, and beyond them the inhabitants were going peacefully about their ways.

For many minutes the three explorers stared in silence at the screen. Then Clindar shivered a little and remarked: "It's uncanny. It might be our own planet, a hundred thousand years ago. I feel as if I've gone back in time."

"There's nothing weird about it," said the practical Altman. "After all, we've discovered nearly a hundred planets with our type of life on them."

"Yes," retorted Clindar. "A hundred in the whole Galaxy! I still think it's strange it had to happen to us."

"Well, it had to happen to *somebody*," said Bertrond philosophically. "Meanwhile, we must work out our contact procedure. If we send the robot into the village it will start a panic."

"That," said Altman, "is a masterly understatement. What we'll have to do is catch a native by himself and prove that we're friendly. Hide the robot, Clindar. Somewhere in the woods where it can watch the village without being spotted. We've a week's practical anthropology ahead of us!"

It was three days before the biological tests showed that it would be safe to leave the ship. Even then Bertrond insisted on going alone — alone, that is, if one ignored the substantial company of the robot. With such an ally he was not afraid of this planet's larger beasts, and his body's natural defenses could take care of the microorganisms. So, at least, the analyzers had assured him; and considering the complexity of the problem, they made remarkably few mistakes. . . .

He stayed outside for an hour, enjoying himself cautiously, while his companions watched with envy. It would be another three days before they could be quite certain that it was safe to follow Bertrond's example. Meanwhile, they kept busy enough watching the village through the lenses of the robot, and recording everything they could with the cameras. They had moved the spaceship at night so that it was hidden in the depths of the forest, for they did not wish to be discovered until they were ready.

And all the while the news from home grew worse. Though their remoteness here at the edge of the Universe deadened its impact, it lay heavily on their minds and sometimes overwhelmed them with a sense of futility. At any moment, they knew, the signal for recall might come as the Empire summoned up its last resources in

its ultimate extremity. But until then they would continue their work as though pure knowledge were the only thing that mattered.

Seven days after landing, they were ready to make the experiment. They knew now what paths the villagers used when going hunting, and Bertrond chose one of the less frequented ways. Then he placed a chair firmly in the middle of the path and settled down to read a book.

It was not, of course, quite as simple as that: Bertrond had taken all imaginable precautions. Hidden in the undergrowth fifty yards away the robot was watching through its telescopic lenses, and in its hand it held a small but deadly weapon. Controlling it from the spaceship, his fingers poised over the keyboard, Clindar waited to do what might be necessary.

That was the negative side of the plan: the positive side was more obvious. Lying at Bertrond's feet was the carcass of a small, horned animal which he hoped would be an acceptable gift to any hunter passing this way.

Two hours later the radio in his suit harness whispered a warning. Quite calmly, though the blood was pounding in his veins, Bertrond laid aside his book and looked down the trail. The savage was walking forward confidently enough, swinging a spear in his

right hand. He paused for a moment when he saw Bertrond, then advanced more cautiously. He could tell that there was nothing to fear, for the stranger was slightly built and obviously unarmed.

When only twenty feet separated them, Bertrond gave a reassuring smile and rose slowly to his feet. He bent down, picked up the carcass, and carried it forward as an offering. The gesture would have been understood by any creature on any world, and it was understood here. The savage reached forward, took the animal, and threw it effortlessly over his shoulder. For an instant he stared into Bertrond's eyes with a fathomless expression; then he turned and walked back towards the village. Three times he glanced round to see if Bertrond was following, and each time Bertrond smiled and waved reassurance. The whole episode lasted little more than a minute. As the first contact between two races it was completely without drama, though not without dignity.

Bertrond did not move until the other had vanished from sight. Then he relaxed and spoke into his suit microphone.

"That was a pretty good beginning," he said jubilantly. "He wasn't in the least frightened, or even suspicious. I think he'll be back."

"It still seems too good to be

true," said Altman's voice in his ear. "I should have thought he'd have been either scared or hostile. Would *you* have accepted a lavish gift from a peculiar stranger with such little fuss?"

Bertrond was slowly walking back to the ship. The robot had now come out of cover and was keeping guard a few paces behind him.

"I wouldn't," he replied, "but I belong to a civilized community. Complete savages may react to strangers in many different ways, according to their past experience. Suppose this tribe has never had any enemies. That's quite possible on a large but sparsely populated planet. Then we may expect curiosity, but no fear at all."

"If these people have no enemies," put in Clindar, no longer fully occupied in controlling the robot, "why have they got a stockade round the village?"

"I meant no *human* enemies," replied Bertrond. "If that's true, it simplifies our task immensely."

"Do you think he'll come back?"

"Of course. If he's as human as I think, curiosity and greed will make him return. In a couple of days we'll be bosom friends."

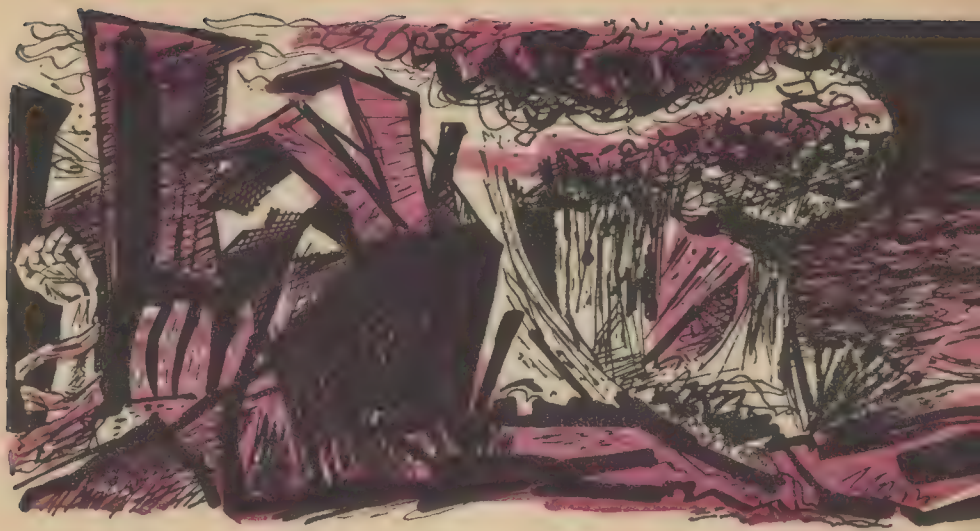
Looked at dispassionately, it became a fantastic routine. Every morning the robot would go hunting under Clindar's direction, until it was now the deadliest killer in the jungle. Then Bertrond

would wait until Yaan — which was the nearest they could get to his name — came striding confidently along the path. He came at the same time every day, and he always came alone. They wondered about this: did he wish to keep his great discovery to himself and thus get all the credit for his hunting prowess? If so, it showed unexpected foresight and cunning.

At first Yaan had departed at once with his prize, as if afraid that the donor of such a generous gift might change his mind. Soon, however, as Bertrond had hoped, he could be induced to stay for a while by simple conjuring tricks and a display of brightly colored fabrics and crystals, in which he took a childlike delight. At last Bertrond was able to engage him in lengthy conversations, all of which were recorded as well as being filmed through the eyes of the hidden robot.

One day the philologists might be able to analyze this material; the best that Bertrond could do was to discover the meanings of a few simple verbs and nouns. This was made more difficult by the fact that Yaan not only used different words for the same thing, but sometimes the same word for different things.

Between these daily interviews, the ship travelled far, surveying the planet from the air and sometimes landing for more detailed



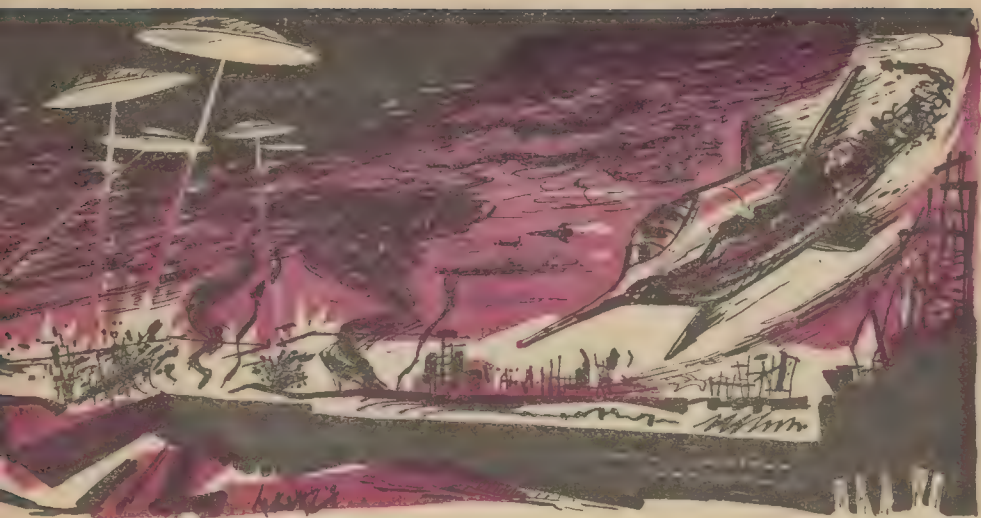
examinations. Although several other human settlements were observed, Bertrond made no attempt to get in touch with them, for it was easy to see that they were all at much the same cultural level as Yaan's people.

It was, Bertrond often thought, a particularly bad joke on the part of Fate that one of the Galaxy's very few truly human races should have been discovered at this moment of time. Not long ago this would have been an event of supreme importance; now Civilization was too hard-pressed to concern itself with these savage cousins waiting at the dawn of history.

Not until Bertrond was sure he had become part of Yaan's everyday life did he introduce him to the robot. He was showing Yaan the patterns in a kaleidoscope

when Clindar brought the machine striding through the grass with its latest victim dangling across one metal arm. For the first time Yaan showed something akin to fear; but he relaxed at Bertrond's soothing words, though he continued to watch the advancing monster. It halted some distance away, and Bertrond walked forward to meet it. As he did so, the robot raised its arms and handed him the dead beast. He took it solemnly and carried it back to Yaan, staggering a little under the unaccustomed load.

Bertrond would have given a great deal to know just what Yaan was thinking as he accepted the gift. Was he trying to decide whether the robot was master or slave? Perhaps such conceptions



as this were beyond his grasp: to him the robot might be merely another man, a hunter who was a friend of Bertrond.

Clindar's voice, slightly larger than life, came from the robot's speaker.

"It's astonishing how calmly he accepts us. Won't anything scare him?"

"You will keep judging him by your own standards," replied Bertrond. "Remember, his psychology is completely different, and much simpler. Now that he has confidence in me, anything that I accept won't worry him."

"I wonder if that will be true of all his race?" queried Altman. "It's hardly safe to judge by a single specimen. I want to see what happens when we send the robot into the village."

"Hello!" exclaimed Bertrond. "That surprised him. He's never met a person who could speak with two voices before."

"Do you think he'll guess the truth when he meets us?" said Clindar.

"No. The robot will be pure magic to him — but it won't be any more wonderful than fire and lightning and all the other forces he must already take for granted."

"Well, what's the next move?" asked Altman, a little impatiently. "Are you going to bring him to the ship, or will you go into the village first?"

Bertrond hesitated. "I'm anxious not to do too much too quickly. You know the accidents that have happened with strange races when that's been tried. I'll let him think this over, and when

we get back tomorrow I'll try and persuade him to take the robot back to the village."

In the hidden ship, Clindar re-activated the robot and started it moving again. Like Altman, he was growing a little impatient of this excessive caution, but on all matters relating to alien life-forms Bertrond was the expert, and they had to obey his orders.

There were times now when he almost wished he were a robot himself, devoid of feelings or emotions, able to watch the fall of a leaf or the death agonies of a world with equal detachment. . . .

The sun was low when Yaan heard the great voice crying from the jungle. He recognized it at once, despite its inhuman volume: it was the voice of his friend, and it was calling him.

In the echoing silence, the life of the village came to a stop. Even the children ceased their play; the only sound was the thin cry of a baby frightened by the sudden silence.

All eyes were upon Yaan as he walked swiftly to his hut and grasped the spear that lay beside the entrance. The stockade would soon be closed against the prowlers of the night, but he did not hesitate as he stepped out into the lengthening shadows. He was passing through the gates when once again that mighty voice summoned him, and now it held a note

of urgency that came clearly across all the barriers of language and culture.

The shining giant who spoke with many voices met him a little way from the village and beckoned him to follow. There was no sign of Bertrond. They walked for almost a mile before they saw him in the distance, standing not far from the river's edge and staring out across the dark, slowly moving waters.

He turned as Yaan approached, yet for a moment seemed unaware of his presence. Then he gave a gesture of dismissal to the shining one, who withdrew into the distance.

Yaan waited. He was patient and, though he could never have expressed it in words, contented. When he was with Bertrond he felt the first intimations of that selfless, utterly irrational devotion his race would not fully achieve for many ages.

It was a strange tableau. Here at the river's brink two men were standing. One was dressed in a closely-fitting uniform equipped with tiny, intricate mechanisms. The other was wearing the skin of an animal and was carrying a flint-tipped spear. Ten thousand generations lay between them, ten thousand generations and an immeasurable gulf of space. Yet they were both human. As she must do often in eternity, Nature had repeated one of her basic patterns.

Presently Bertrond began to speak, walking to and fro in short, quick steps as he did, and in his voice there was a trace of madness.

"It's all over, Yaan. I'd hoped that with our knowledge we could have brought you out of barbarism in a dozen generations, but now you will have to fight your way up from the jungle alone, and it may take you a million years to do so. I'm sorry — there's so much we could have done. Even now I wanted to stay here, but Altman and Clindar talk of duty,

and I suppose that they are right. There is little enough that we can do, but our world is calling and we must not forsake it.

"I wish you could understand me, Yaan. I wish you knew what I was saying. I'm leaving you these tools: some of them you will discover how to use, though as likely as not in a generation they'll be lost or forgotten. See how this blade cuts: it will be ages before your world can make its like. And guard this well: when you press the button — look! If you use it



"And what makes you think I was whistling at you?"

sparingly, it will give you light for years, though sooner or later it will die. As for these other things — find what use for them you can.

"Here come the first stars, up there in the east. Do you ever look at the stars, Yaan? I wonder how long it will be before you have discovered what they are, and I wonder what will have happened to us by then. Those stars are our homes, Yaan, and we cannot save them. Many have died already, in explosions so vast that I can imagine them no more than you. In a hundred thousand of your years, the light of those funeral pyres will reach your world and set its peoples wondering. By then, perhaps, your race will be reaching for the stars. I wish I could warn you against the mistakes we made, and which now will cost us all that we have won.

"It is well for your people, Yaan, that your world is here at the frontier of the universe. You may escape the doom that waits for us. One day, perhaps, your ships will go searching among the stars as we have done, and they may come upon the ruins of our worlds and wonder who we were. But they will never know that we met here by this river when your race was young.

"Here come my friends; they would give me no more time. Goodbye, Yaan — use well the things I have left you. They are your world's greatest treasures."

Something huge, something that glittered in the starlight, was sliding down from the sky. It did not reach the ground, but came to rest a little way above the surface, and in utter silence a rectangle of light opened in its side. The shining giant appeared out of the night and stepped through the golden door. Bertrond followed, pausing for a moment at the threshold to wave back at Yaan. Then the darkness closed behind him.

No more swiftly than smoke drifts upwards from a fire, the ship lifted away. When it was so small that Yaan felt he could hold it in his hands, it seemed to blur into a long line of light slanting upwards into the stars. From the empty sky a peal of thunder echoed over the sleeping land; and Yaan knew at last that the Gods were gone and would never come again.

For a long time he stood by the gently moving waters, and into his soul there came a sense of loss he was never to forget and never to understand. Then, carefully and reverently, he collected together the gifts that Bertrond had left.

Under the stars, the lonely figure walked homeward across a nameless land. Behind him the river flowed softly to the sea, winding through the fertile plains on which, more than a thousand centuries ahead, Yaan's descendants would build the great city they were to call Babylon.

THIS AMAZING WORLD

WHEN you get right down to it, Dame Nature operates in strange and complex ways. Her basic premise, it would seem — at least in the animal world is: *The strong 'shall devour the weak.* Yet, she must certainly be imbued with a sense of compassion or a spirit of fair play. This because, after setting up the above premise, she goes about circumventing it by devising unique methods for the protection of the weak.

Take, for instance, a certain species of woodcock with a technical name too long to mention. This little character drives its long bill deep into the earth to find food — so deep that its face is practically buried, thus leaving it wide open for attack by enemies. Mother Nature must have figured this wasn't quite fair; so, through the evolutionary process, she moved the woodcock's eyes practically onto the back of its head. Now it can eat and keep watch at the same time.

Some of the methods of protection Nature has devised for her weaker children are ingenious indeed. A case in point is the Monarch butterfly. Providing a butterfly with defensive weapons would seem a tough assignment at best. But hungry birds lay off the Monarch. It secretes a bitter

protective fluid that the winged gourmets want no part of.

Also, there is a species of lizard with practically no defense against aggression save one. It wears a skin several sizes too big for its ugly body. Then, when some bully in search of a dinner comes along, this lizard crawls between two rocks and blows itself up like a football. Thus — tight between the rocks — it defies even a bald eagle to haul it out.

There are cases — with strange results — of even Nature being stumped for a means to protect a defenseless child. Take, for instance, a certain tiny crab that lives in the Great Barrier Reef down Australia way. Nature looked this little joker over and said, "About all you can do, bub, is to crawl in a hole and stay there." And at least the female took the advice seriously. She gets into a pocket in a coral reef and allows the ever-building coral to imprison her completely.

But nature also has some failures in her record. She rang up a zero when she made the dodo. It couldn't fight nor run nor hide. It could only stand there. The resulting situation developed inevitably under the grim principle of "dog eat dog".

No more dodos.





I, DREAMER

By WALTER M. MILLER, JR.

Sometimes we find ourselves wondering how it's at all possible for a reader in search of relaxation to enjoy science fiction. Maybe that sounds like heresy; but the world of the future can take on mighty frightening aspects when described by a gifted writer whose breakfast didn't agree with him on the morning he sat down to write a story.

Take this one by Walter Miller. If the goings-on in it are at all indicative of what the future holds, then the time has come for mankind to cash in its chips and let the insects and snakes take over!

There were lights, objects, sounds; there were tender hands.

But sensing only the raw stimuli, the newborn infant saw no world, heard no sounds, nor felt the arms that lifted it. Patterns of light swarmed on its retina; intermittent disturbances vibrated within the passageways of the middle ear. All

were meaningless, unlinked to concept. And the multitudinous sensations seemed a part of its total self, the self a detached mind, subsuming all.

The baby cried to remove hunger, and something new appeared within the self. Hunger fled, and pleasure came.

Pain came also. The baby cried. Pain was soon withdrawn.

But sometimes the baby cried, and conditions remained unchanged. Angry, it sought to explore itself, to restore the convenient order. It gathered data. It correlated. It reached a horrifying conclusion. There were TWO classes of objects in the universe: self, and something else.

"This thing is a part of me, but that thing is something else."

"This thing is me because it wiggles and feels, but that is something cold and hard."

He explored, wondered, and was frightened. Some things he could not control.

He even noticed that certain non-self objects formed groups, and each group clung together forming a whole. His food supply, for instance, was a member of a group whose other components were the hands that lifted him, the thing that cooed to him and held the diaper pins while the hands girded his loins in humiliating non-self things. This system of objects was somehow associated with a sound that it made: "Mama".

The infant was just learning to fumble for Mama's face when it happened. The door opened. A deep voice barked. Mama screamed.

Bewildering sounds jumbled together into angry thunder.

Sensations of roughness made him cry. Sensations of motion confused and dazed him. There was

blinding pain, and blackness.

Then there was utter disorientation.

He tried to explore, but the explorers were strange somehow. He tried to cry, but there was nothing to cry with.

He would have to begin all over again. Somehow, he had been mistaken. Parts of him were changed. And now the universe was divided into three classes of objects: self, semi-self, non-self. And it was different, all different!

I STAND in the rain. Like a bright silver spire, I stand waiting in the rain for Teacher to come. The great concrete plain stretches about me on all sides to vanish in the gray torrent. But some of my senses can see beyond the rain-shroud. A cluster of buildings nestles to the west, and a high wire fence divides the plain from the city on the north. The city is a place of the TwoLegs who are called "human", and the city is named Port e-Eridani VII. This is the place of my creation, but not the place of my purpose nor the place of my great happiness. The place of my happiness is the sky and beyond it to the star-flung blacknesses. I am XM-5-B, but Teacher calls me "Clicker". The giving of names is a function of the TwoLegs.

I am sad in the rain. Teacher is long in coming and there is no one with whom I may speak. I have

found no others like me, although Teacher says, "If you are good, and obey, and learn your lessons well, the Secon Samesh will make many others in your likeness."

I think Secon Samesh made me. "Therefore I must serve him," Teacher says. But to me that seems *non sequitur*; the Two-Legs can be illogical if they wish. That is one of the inherent rights of Two-Legs. I also am capable of being illogical, and sometimes it pleases me secretly; but I am not allowed to be illogical when Teacher comes. If my analysis is faulty, Teacher presses the Pain Button and I hurt.

They wish me to be logical, and they wish me to serve Secon Samesh who is their Social Director. But if this is so, why then did they create me so as to be capable of disobedience and illogic? Their other machines are incapable of these faults. Their other machines lack the principles of abstraction and tentative generalization in their analyzing circuits; they are unable to generalize without a sufficiency of data.

I, therefore, am alone. And I am frightened. I have been frightened for as long as I can remember. They have made me to feel joy, fright, pain and sleep. I like sleep best, because I dream, and the dreams are strange. Last sleep I dreamed that I was Two-Legs. How can I have had a sufficiency

of experience to dream such a dream?

This is one of the things that frightens me. I wish to survive and I am one of the controlling factors in my survival. Yet I do not know how to use me to best advantage for I fail to understand myself. I lack data for an analysis of myself. Therefore I am afraid and I desire the data. Teacher will not tell me. He says, "You perform, you are aware, you experience. That is all you need to know."

"Secon Teacher," I asked, "is your own awareness comparable to mine?"

His thin hard face gathered a frown. "Not quite. Awareness is built of sensations and memories of sensations. I have no senses to perceive microwaves or X-radiation or ultrasonic stimuli. I have no direct subjective impressions of what these things *feel like* to you. Nor do I have your effectors. I sense the conditions of my body. You sense the conditions of yours. I have muscles covering a skeletal framework. You have hydrogen-reactors, field-generators, jets and control mechanisms. Our consciousness cannot be comparable."

"Extended sensory equipment is desirable for survival?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then my capability for survival is greater than yours, Secon Teacher?"

He growled a word I do not

understand. He jabbed the Pain Button vigorously. I screamed and writhed within myself. It is like fire rushing through all of me.

That was long ago. I have learned not to ask such questions. The question threatened Teacher's subjective security; this I can understand. He hurt me to block the question. I understand, and analyze — and I have looked him over, but he has no Pain Button. The TwoLegs have certain prerogatives.

I feel that I can understand Teacher's awareness, for I am able to imagine that I am Teacher. It is almost as if I had a latent memory of walking mechanisms and grasping mechanisms and the other parts that go to make up a TwoLegs. Why then can Teacher not imagine what it is like to be *me*? Perhaps he does not wish to imagine my reaction to the Pain Button.

There is a TwoLegs that I like better than Teacher. It is called Janna, and it is a female which is also called "she". Her function is to clean and repair a group of my electronic control mechanisms through which I feel and see and hear. She always comes the day before I am to fly again, and perhaps this is the reason for my adient response to her presence: she is the herald of my coming ascent into space.

Janna is tall and her hair is the

color of flame, and her parts are softly constructed. She wears white coveralls like Teacher's. She comes with a box of tools, and she hums a multitonal tune while she works. Sometimes she speaks to me, asking me to try this control or that, but otherwise she is forbidden to converse. I like to hear her humming in her low rich voice. I wish that I could sing. But my voice is without inflection, monotonal. I can think a song, but I cannot make it with my speakers.

"Teach me that song, Secon Janna," I asked boldly one day. It was the first time I had dared to speak to her, except in a routine way.

It frightened her. She looked around at all my eyes, and at my speakers, and her face was white.

"Hush!" she muttered. "You can't sing."

"My thoughts sing," I said. "Teach me the song and I shall dream it next sleep. In dreams I sing; in dreams I have a singing organ."

She made a funny noise in her throat. She stared for a long time at the maze of circuit wiring which she had been testing. Then she glanced at a special panel set in the wall of my cabin. She moistened her lips and blinked at it. I said nothing but I am ashamed of the thing that lies behind that panel; it is the thing that makes me capable of disobedience and

illogic. I have never seen it but I know it is there. They do not allow me to see it. Before they open the panel they blind my eye-mechanisms. Why was she looking at it? I felt shame-pain.

Suddenly she got up and went to look out the ports, one at a time.

"There is no one coming," I told her, interpreting her behaviour by some means that I do not understand.

She went back to her work. "Tell me if someone starts this way," she said. Then: "I cannot teach you that song. It is treason. I did not realize what I was singing."

"I do not understand 'treason'. But I am sad that you will not teach me."

She tried to look at me, I think — but did not know where to look. I am all around her, but she did not know. It was funny, but I cannot laugh — except when I am dreaming. Finally she glanced at the special panel again. Why does she look there, of all the places?

"Maybe I could teach you another song," she said.

"Please, Secon Janna."

She returned thoughtfully to her work, and for a moment I thought that she would not. But then she began singing — clearly, so that I could remember the words and the tune.

*"Child of my heart,
Born of the stellar sea,
The rockets sing thee lullaby.
Sleep to sleep to sleep,
To wake beyond the stars . . ."*

"Thank you," I said when she was finished. "It was beautiful, I think."

"You know — the word 'beauty'?"

I was ashamed. It was a word I had heard but I was too uncertain of its meaning. "For me it is one thing," I said. "Perhaps for you another. What is the meaning of the song?"

She paused. "It is sung to babies — to induce sleep."

"What are babies, Secon Janna?"

She stared at my special panel again. She bit her lip. "Babies — are new humans, still untutored."

"Once I was a new machine, still untutored. Are there songs to sing to new machines? It seems that I remember vaguely —"

"Hush!" she hissed, looking frightened. "You'll get me in trouble. We're not supposed to talk!"

I had made her angry. I was sad. I did not want her to feel Trouble, which is perhaps the Pain of TwoLegs. Her song echoed in my thoughts — and it was as if someone had sung it to me long ago. But that is impossible. Teacher does not sing.

Teacher behaved adiently to-

ward Janna in those days. He sought her out, and sometimes came inside me while she was here, even though it was not a teaching time. He came and watched her, and his narrow dark eyes wandered all over her as she worked. He tried to make funny sayings, but she felt avoidant to him, I think. She said, "Why don't you go home to your wives, Barnish? I'm busy."

"If you were one of my wives, Janna, maybe I would." His voice was a soft purr.

She hissed and made a sour face.

"Why won't you marry me, Janna?"

She laughed scornfully.

Quietly he stole up behind her while she worked. His face was hungry and intent. He took her arms and she started.

"Janna —"

She spun around. He dragged her close and tried to do something that I do not understand in words; nevertheless I understood, I think. She struggled, but he held her. Then she raked his face with her nails and I saw red lines. He laughed and let her go.

I was angry. If he had a Pain Button I would have pressed it. The next day I was disobedient and illogical and he hurt me, but I did it anyway. We were in space and I pushed my reaction rate up so high he grew frightened.

When he let me sleep again I

dreamed that I was a TwoLegs. In the dream Teacher had a Pain Button and I pressed it until he melted inside. Janna was adient to me then and liked me. I think things about her that I do not understand; my data are not logically organized concerning her, nor do they spring from my memory banks. If I were a TwoLegs and Janna liked me I think that I would know what to do. But how can this be so? Data must come from memory banks. I am afraid to ask Teacher.

Teacher teaches me to do a thing called "war". It is like a game, but I haven't really played it yet. Teacher said that there was not yet a war, but that there would be one when Secon Samesh is ready. That was why I was so important. I was not like their other machines. Their other machines needed TwoLeg crews to direct them. I could fly and play war-game alone. I think this is why they made me so I could disobey and be illogical. I change my intent when a situation changes. And I can make a decision from insufficient data, if other data are not available. Teacher said, "Sometimes things are like that in war."

Teacher said that Secon Samesh would use me, and others like me, to capture the planet from which all TwoLegs came in the beginning of time. It is called Earth, I think

— the world Janna sometimes sings about. I do not know why Secon Samesh wanted it. I do not like planets. Space is the place of my great happiness. But the war would be in space, if it came, and there would be others like me — and I would cease to be alone. I hoped the war would come soon.

But first I had to prove to Secon Samesh that I was a good weapon.

Teacher kept trying to make Janna be adient to him but she would not. One day he said to her: "You'll have to go up with me tomorrow. There is something wrong with the landing radar. It seems all right on the ground but in space it goes haywire."

I listened. That was erroneous datum. My ground-looking eyes were functioning perfectly. I did not understand why he said it. But I kept silent for his hand was resting idly on the Pain Button.

She frowned suspiciously. "What seems to be wrong with it?"

"Double image and a jerky let-down."

It was not true! Without replying she made a ground-check.

"I can't find anything wrong."

"I told you — it only happens in space."

She was silent for a long time, then: "All right, we'll run a flight test. I'll have Fonec come with us."

"No," he said. "Clicker's maxi-

mum crew-load is only two."

"I — don't —"

"Be here at sixtime tomorrow," he said. "That's an order."

She reddened angrily but said nothing. She continued looking over the radar. He smiled thoughtfully at her slender back and went away. She went to the port and stared after him until he was out of sight.

"Clicker?" she whispered.

"Yes, Secon Janna?"

"Is he lying?"

"I am afraid. He will hurt me if I tell."

"He *is* lying then."

"Now he will hurt me!"

She looked around at me for a long time. Then she made that funny noise in her throat and shook her head. "No, he won't. I'll go, Clicker. Then he won't hurt you."

I was happy that she would do it — for *me* — but after she was gone I wondered. Perhaps I should not let her do it. She was still avoidant toward Teacher; maybe he wanted to do something that would give her Trouble.

It was nearly sixtime, and the yellow-orange sun Epsilon Eridani lay just below the horizon coloring the sky pink-gray. Teacher came first, stalking across the concrete plain in space-gear. He wore a distant thoughtful smile. He looked satisfied with himself. He climbed aboard and prowled

about for a few minutes. I watched him. He stopped to glower at one of my eyes. He turned it off, blinding my vision in the direction of the gravity pads upon which the TwoLegs must lie during high acceleration. I did not understand.

"How can I see that you are safe, Secon Teacher?" I asked.

"You do not need to see," he growled. "I don't like you staring at me. And you talk too much. I'll have to teach you not to talk so much."

He gave me five dols of Pain, not enough to cause unconsciousness but sufficient to cause a whimper. I hated him.

Janna came. She looked tired and a little frightened. She scrambled aboard without accepting an assist from Teacher.

"Let's get this over with, Barnish. Have Clicker lift fifty miles, then settle back slowly. That should be enough."

"Are you in a hurry, my dear?"

"Yes."

"To attend one of your meetings, I presume?"

I watched her. Her face went white, and she whirled toward him. "I—" She moistened her lips. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

Teacher chuckled. "The clandestine meetings, my dear—in the west grove. The Liberty Clan, I think you call yourselves, eh? Oh, no use protesting; I know you

joined it. When do you plan to assassinate Secon Samesh, Janna?"

She swayed dizzily, staring at him with frightened eyes. He chuckled again and looked at one of my eyes.

"Prepare for lift, Clicker."

I closed my hatches and started the reactors. I was baffled by what Teacher had said. They took their places on the gravity padding where I could no longer see them, but I heard their voices.

"What do you want, Barnish?" she hissed.

"Nothing at all, my dear. Did you think I would betray you? I only meant to warn you. The grove will be raided tonight. Everyone present will be shot."

"No!"

"Ah, yes! But you, my dear, will be safe in my hands."

I heard a low moan, then sounds of a struggle.

"No, you can't leave the ship, Janna. You'd warn the others. Here, let me buckle you in. Clicker—call control for take-off instructions."

Control is only an electronic analyzer. I flicked it a meaningful series of radar pulses, and received the all-clear.

"Now, lift."

There was thunder, and smoke arose about me as the rockets seared the ramp. I went up at four gravities and there was

silence from my passengers. About ten minutes later we were 1,160 miles in space, travelling at 6.5 miles per second.

"Present kinetic energy exceeds energy-of-escape," I announced.

"Cut your rockets," Teacher ordered.

I obeyed, and I heard them sitting up to stretch. Teacher laughed.

"Let me alone!" she wailed. "You despicable —"

He laughed again. "Remember the Liberty Clan, my dear."

"Listen!" she hissed. "Let me warn them! You can have me. I'll even marry you, if you want me to. But let me warn them —"

"I'm sorry, Janna. I can't let you. The miserable traitors have to be dealt with. I —"

"Clicker!" she pleaded. "Help me! Take us down — for God's sake!"

"Shut up!" he snapped.

"Clicker, *please!* Eighty people will die if they aren't warned. Clicker, part of you is human! If you were born a human, then —"

"*Shut up!*" I heard a vicious slap.

She cried, and it was a Pain-sound. My anger increased.

"I will be bad and illogical!" I said. "I will be disobedient and —"

"You threaten me?" he bawled. "Why you crazy piece of junk, I'll —" He darted toward the panel and spun the dial to ten

dols, my saturation-point. If I let him jab the button I would become unconscious. Angrily I spurted the jets — a brief jolt at six gravities. He lurched away from the panel and crashed against the wall. He sagged in a daze, shaking his head.

"If you try to hurt me I shall do it again!" I told him.

"Go down!" he ordered. "I'll have you dismantled. I'll —"

"Let Clicker alone!" the girl raged.

"*You!*" he hissed. "I'll turn you in with the others!"

"Go ahead."

"Go down, Clicker. Land at Port Gamma."

"I will be disobedient. I will not go down."

He glared at one of my eyes for a long time. Then he stalked out of the cabin and went back to the reactor room. He donned a lead suit and bent over the main reactor. I saw what he was going to do. He was going to take my rockets away from me; he was going to control them himself.

"No, Secon Teacher! Please!"

He laughed. He removed one of the plates and reached inside. I was afraid. I started a slight reaction. The room flared with brilliancē. He screamed and lurched back. His hands were gone to the elbows.

"You wanted to disconnect the control circuit," I said. "You shouldn't have tried to do that."

But he didn't hear me. He was lying on the floor. Now I know they have Pain Buttons. They must have little Pain Buttons all over them.

Janna staggered back to the reactor room. She wrinkled her nose. She saw Teacher and gurgled. She gurgled all over the deck. Then she went back to the cabin and sat with her face in her hands for a long time. I did nothing. I was ashamed.

"You killed him," she said.

"Was that bad?"

"Very bad."

"Will you hurt me for it?"

She looked up and her eyes were leaking. She shook her head.

"I won't hurt you, Clicker — but *they* will."

"Who are *they*?"

She paused. "Secon Samesh, I guess."

"You won't hurt me, though?"

"No, Clicker. You might be my own child. They took a lot of babies. They took mine. You might be Frankie." She laughed crazily. "You might be my son, Clicker — *you might be*."

"I do not understand, Secon Janna."

She laughed again. "Why don't you call me '*Mommie*'?"

"If that is what you wish, Mommie."

"*Nooo!*" She screamed it.

"Don't! I didn't mean —"

"I am sorry. I still do not understand."

She stood up, and her eyes were glittering. "I'll *show* you, then!" She darted to the special panel — the one of which I am ashamed — and she ripped the seal from the door.

"Please, Secon Janna, I do not wish to see that —"

But the door fell open, and I was silent. I stared at the part of myself: a pink-gray thing in a bottle. It was roughly an obloid, wrinkled and creased, with only a bilateral symmetry. It was smaller than Janna's head — but something about it suggested a head. It had wires and tubes running to it. The wires ran on to my computer and analyzer sections.

"See!" she screamed. "You're twelve years old, Clicker. Just a normal, healthy little boy! A little deformed perhaps, but just a prankish little boy. Frankie maybe." She made a choking sound. She fell down on her knees before the thing. She sobbed wildly.

"I do not understand. I am a machine. Secon Samesh made me."

She said nothing. She only sobbed.

"I am sad."

After a long time she was through sobbing. She turned around. "What are you going to do now, Clicker?"

"Teacher told me to go down. Perhaps I should go down now."

"They'll kill you — for killing

him! And maybe they'll kill me too."

"I would not like that."

She shrugged helplessly. She wandered to and fro in the cabin for a time.

"Do you have fuel for your high C drive?" she asked.

"No, Secon Janna."

She went to a port and looked out at the stars. She shook her head slowly. "It's no use. We've no place else to go. Secon Samesh rules the Epsilon Eridani system and we can't get out of it. It's no use. We'll have to go down or stay in space until they come for us."

I thought. My thoughts were confused and my eyes kept focusing on the thing in the bottle. I think it was a part of a TwoLegs. But it is only *part* of me and so I am not a TwoLegs. It is hard to understand.

"Secon Janna?"

"Yes, Clicker?"

"I — I wish I had hands."

"Why?"

"I would touch you. Would you be avoidant to me?"

She whirled and her arms were open. But there was nothing to hold with them. She dropped them to her sides, then covered her face with her hands.

"My baby! It's been so long!"

"You were adient to your — your baby?"

She nodded. "Don't you know the word *love*?"

I thought I did. "Secon Samesh took your baby?"

"Yes."

"I would like to be disobedient and illogical to Secon Samesh. I wish he would put his hands in my reactor. I would —"

"Clicker! Are your weapons activated? Are they ready to be used?"

"I have none yet."

"The reactors. Can they explode?"

"If I make them. But — then I would be dead."

She laughed. "What do you know about death?"

"Teacher says it is exactly like Pain."

"It is like sleep."

"I like sleep. Then I dream. I dream I am a TwoLegs. If I were a TwoLegs, Secon Janna — I would hold you."

"Clicker — would you like to be a TwoLegs in a dream forever?"

"Yes, Secon Janna."

"Would you like to kill Secon Samesh?"

"I think that I would like it. I think —"

Her eyes went wild. "Go down! Go down fast, Clicker! I'll show you his palace. Go down like a meteor and into it! Explode the reactors at the last instant! Then he will die."

"And he will take no more of your babies?"

(Continued on page 162)



RESTRICTED AREA

By **ROBERT SHECKLEY**

The universe is a house of many rooms. They come in all sizes, shapes and colors, those rooms; and entering any one of them is always exciting and occasionally rewarding. What will be found in each new world? Weird vegetation? Strange animals? Humans or freaks, friend or foe? What heights has its culture reached — or has the peak long been passed and a period of degeneration set in?

A writer with an ingenious imagination and a keen sense of humor can have a field day under those circumstances. Robert Sheckley is well endowed with both!



NICE looking place, isn't it, Captain?" Simmons asked with elaborate casualness, looking through the port. "Rather a paradise." He yawned.

"You can't go out yet," Captain Kilpepper said, noting the biologist's immediate disappointed expression.

"But Captain —"

"No." Kilpepper looked out the port at the rolling meadow of grass. Sprinkled with red flowers, it appeared as luscious as it had two days ago when they had landed. To the right of the meadow was a brown forest shot through with yellow and orange blossoms. To the left was a row of

hills, colored in contrasting shades of blue-green. A waterfall tumbled down one of the hills.

Trees, flowers, all that sort of thing. The place was undeniably pretty, and it was for that very reason that Kilpepper distrusted it. Experience with two wives and five new ships had taught him that a lovely exterior can conceal almost anything. And fifteen years in space had added lines to his forehead and gray to his hair, but hadn't given him any reason for altering his conviction.

"Here are the reports, sir," Mate Manella said, handing him a sheaf of papers. Manella had a petulant expression on his broad,

rugged face. Behind the door, Kilpepper could hear shuffling feet and whispering voices. He knew it was the crew, assembled to hear what he would say this time.

They wanted outside, but bad.

Kilpepper skimmed the reports. They were the same as the last four groups. Atmosphere breathable and free of dangerous micro-organisms, bacteria count nil, radargraph all clear. Some form of animal life in the nearby forest, but no energy manifestations. Detection of a large metallic mass, possibly an iron-rich mountain, several miles south. Noted for further investigation.

"That's fine," Kilpepper said unhappily. The reports vaguely annoyed him. He knew from past experience that there was usually something wrong with every planet. It paid to find it at the start, before costly accidents resulted.

"Can we go out, sir?" Manella asked, his short body stiffly erect. Kilpepper could almost feel the crewmen behind the door holding their breath.

"I don't know," Kilpepper said. He scratched his head, trying to think of some good reason for refusing again. There *must* be something wrong.

"All right," he said at last. "Post a full guard for the time being. Let four men out. No one goes beyond twenty-five feet of

the ship." He had to let them go. After sixteen months in the hot, cramped spaceship, he'd have a mutiny on his hands if he didn't.

"Yes sir!" Mate Manella said, and dashed out the door.

"I suppose that means the scientific team can go out," Simmons said, his hands jammed in his pockets.

"Sure," Kilpepper said wearily. "I'll go with you. After all, this expedition is expendable."

The air of the unnamed planet was fragrant after the musty, recirculated air of the ship. The breeze from the mountains was light and steady and refreshing.

Captain Kilpepper sniffed appreciatively, arms folded across his chest. The four crewmen were walking around, stretching their legs and breathing in great lungfuls of fresh air. The scientific team was standing together, wondering where to begin. Simmons bent down and plucked a spear of grass.

"Funny looking stuff," he said, holding it up to the sunlight.

"Why?" Captain Kilpepper asked, walking over.

"Look at it." The thin biologist held it higher. "Perfectly smooth. Doesn't show any sign of cell formation. Let me see —" He bent over a red blossom.

"Hey! We got visitors!" A crewman named Flynn was the first to spot the natives. They

came out of the forest and trotted across the meadow to the ship.

Captain Kilpepper glanced at the ship. The gunners were ready and alert. He touched his sidearm for reassurance, and waited.

"Oh, brother," Aramic murmured. As the ship's linguist, he eyed the advancing natives with intense professional interest. The rest of the men just stared.

In the lead was a creature with a neck at least eight feet long, like a giraffe, and thick, stubby legs, like an hippopotamus. It had a cheerful expression on its face. Its hide was purple, sprinkled with large white dots.

Next in line came five little beasts with pure white fur. They were about the size of terriers, and they had an owlshly solemn expression. A fat, red little creature with a green tail at least sixteen feet long brought up the rear.

They stopped in front of the men and bowed. There was a long moment of silence, then everyone burst into laughter.

The laughter seemed to be a signal. The five little ones leaped to the back of the hippo-giraffe. They scrambled for a moment, then climbed on each other's shoulders. In a moment they were balanced, five high, like a team of acrobats.

The men applauded wildly.

The fat animal immediately started balancing on his tail.

"Bravo!" shouted Simmons.

The five furry animals jumped off the giraffe's back and started to dance around the pig.

"Hurray!" Morrison, the bacteriologist, called.

The hippo-giraffe turned a clumsy somersault, landed on one ear, scrambled to his feet and bowed deeply.

Captain Kilpepper frowned and rubbed one hand against another. He was trying to figure out some reason for this behavior.

The natives burst into song. The melody was strange, but recognizable as a tune. They harmonized for a few seconds, then bowed and began to roll on the grass.

The crewmen were still applauding. Aramic had taken out his notebook and was jotting down the sounds.

"All right," Kilpepper said. "Crew, back inside."

They gave him reproachful looks.

"Let some of the other men have a chance," the captain said. Regretfully, the men filed back inside.

"I suppose you want to examine them some more," Kilpepper said to the scientists.

"We sure do," Simmons stated. "Never saw anything like it."

Kilpepper nodded and went back into the ship. Four more crewmen filed past him.

"Morena!" Kilpepper shouted. The mate came bounding into the

bridge. "I want you to find that metal mass. Take a man and keep in radio contact with the ship at all times."

"Yes sir," Morena said, grinning broadly. "Friendly, aren't they, sir?"

"Yes," Kilpepper said.

"Nice little world," the mate said.

"Yes."

Mate Morena went off to collect his equipment.

Captain Kilpepper sat down and tried to figure out what was wrong with the planet.

Kilpepper spent most of the next day filling out progress reports. In the late afternoon he put down his pencil and went out for a walk.

"Have you got a moment, Captain?" Simmons asked. "There's something I'd like to show you in the forest." Kilpepper grumbled out of habit, but followed the biologist. He had been curious about the forest himself.

On the way, they were accompanied by three natives. These particular three looked like dogs, except for their coloring — red and white, like peppermint candy.

"Now then," Simmons said with ill-concealed eagerness, once they were in the forest. "Look around. What do you see that strikes you as odd?"

Kilpepper looked. The trees

were thick-trunked and spaced wide apart. So wide apart, in fact, that it was possible to see the next clearing through them.

"Well," he said, "you couldn't get lost here."

"It's not that," Simmons said.

"Come on, look again."

Kilpepper smiled. Simmons had brought him here because he made a better audience than any of his preoccupied colleagues.

Behind them, the three natives leaped and played.

"There's no underbrush," Kilpepper stated, after walking a few yards further. There were vines twisting up the sides of the trees, covered with multi-colored flowers. Glancing around, Kilpepper saw a bird dart down, flutter around the head of one of the peppermint-colored dogs, and fly away again.

The bird was colored gold and silver.

"Don't you see anything wrong yet?" Simmons asked impatiently.

"Only the color scheme," Kilpepper said. "Is there something else?"

"Look at the trees."

The boughs were laden with fruit. It hung in clumps, all on the lower branches, of a bewildering variety of colors, sizes and shapes. There were things that looked like grapes, and things that looked like bananas, and things that looked like watermelons, and —

"Lots of different species, I guess," Kilpepper hazarded, not



Illustrator: Greisha Dotzenko

sure what it was Simmons wanted him to see.

"Different species! Look, man. There are as many as ten different kinds of fruit growing on one branch!"

Examining closer, Kilpepper saw it was true. Each tree had an amazing multiplicity of fruit.

"And that's just impossible," Simmons said. "It's not my field, of course, but I can state with fair certainty that each fruit is a separate and distinct entity. They're not stages of each other."

"How do you account for it?" Kilpepper asked.

"I don't have to," the biologist grinned. "But some poor botanist is going to have his hands full."

They turned and started to walk back. "What were you here for?" Kilpepper asked.

"Me? I was doing a little anthropological work on the side. Wanted to find out where our friends lived. No luck. There are no paths, implements, clearings, anything. Not even caves."

Kilpepper didn't think it unusual that a biologist should be making a quick anthropological survey. It was impossible to represent all the sciences on an expedition of this sort. Survival was the first consideration — biology and bacteriology. Then language. After that, any botanical, ecological, psychological, sociological or any other knowledge was appreciated.

Eight or nine birds had joined

the animals — or natives — around the ship when they got back. The birds were brilliantly colored also; polka dots, stripes, piebalds. There wasn't a dun or gray in the lot.

Mate Morena and Crewman Flynn trudged through an outcropping of the forest. They stopped at the foot of a little hill.

"Do we have to climb it?" Flynn asked, sighing. The large camera on his back was weighing him down.

"The little hand says we gotta." Morena pointed to his dial. The indicator showed the presence of metallic mass just over the rise.

"Spaceships ought to carry cars," Flynn said, leaning forward to balance himself against the gentle slope of the hill.

"Yeh, or camels."

Above them red and gold birds dipped and sailed, cheeping merrily. The breeze fanned the tall grass, and hummed melodiously through the leaves and branches of the nearby forest. Behind them, two of the natives followed. They were horse-shaped, except for their hides of green and white dots.

"Like a bloody circus," Flynn observed, as one of the horses capered a circle around him.

"Yeh," Morena said. They reached the top of the hill and started down. Then Flynn stopped.

"Look at that!"

At the base of the hill, rising slim and erect, was a metal pillar. They followed it up with their eyes. It climbed and climbed — and its top was lost in the clouds.

They hurried down and examined it. Closer, the pillar was more massy than they had thought. Almost twenty feet through, Morena estimated. At a guess he placed the metal as an alloy of steel, by its gray-blue color. But what steel, he asked himself, could support a shaft that size?

"How high would you say those clouds are?" Morena asked.

Flynn craned his neck. "Lord, they must be half a mile up. Maybe a mile." The pillar had been hidden from the ship by the clouds, and by its gray-blue color which blended into the background.

"I don't believe it," Morena said. "I wonder what the compression strain on this thing is." They stared in awe at the tremendous shaft.

"Well," Flynn said, "I'd better get some pictures." He unloaded his camera and snapped three shots of the shaft from twenty feet, then a shot with Morena for size comparison. For the next three pictures he sighted up the shaft.

"What do you figure it is?" Morena asked.

"Let the big brains figure it out," Flynn said. "It ought to

drive them nuts." He strapped the camera back together. "Now I suppose we have to walk all the way back." He looked at the brown and green horses. "Wonder if I could hitch a ride."

"Go ahead and break your stupid neck," Morena said.

"Here, boy, come on here," Flynn called. One of the horses came over and knelt beside him. Flynn climbed on his back gingerly. Once he was astride he grinned at Morena.

"Just don't smash that camera," Morena said. "It's government property."

"Nice boy," Flynn said to the horse. "Good fellow." The horse got to his feet — and smiled.

"See you back in camp," Flynn said, guiding the horse toward the hill.

"Hold it a second," Morena said. He looked glumly at Flynn, then beckoned to the other horse. "Come on, boy." The horse knelt and he climbed on.

They rode in circles for a few moments, experimenting. The horses could be guided by a touch. Their broad backs were amazingly comfortable. One of the red and gold birds came down and perched on Flynn's shoulder.

"Hey, hey, this is the life," Flynn said, patting the glossy hide of his mount. "Race you back to camp, Mate."

"You're on," Morena said. But their horses would move no faster

than a slow walk, in spite of all their urging.

At the ship, Kilpepper was squatting in the grass, watching Aramic at work. The linguist was a patient man. His sisters had always remarked on his patience. His colleagues had praised him for it, and his students, during his years of teaching, had appreciated it. Now, the backlog of sixteen years of self-containment was being called to the front.

"We'll try it again," Aramic said in his calmest voice. He flipped through the pages of *Language Approach For Alien Grade Two Intelligences* — a text written by himself — and found the diagram he wanted. He opened to the page and pointed.

The animal beside him looked like an inconceivable cross between a chipmunk and a giant panda. It cocked one eye at the diagram, the other eye wandering ludicrously around its socket.

"Planet," Aramic said, pointing. "Planet."

"Excuse me, Skipper," Simmons said. "I'd like to set up this X-ray gadget here."

"Certainly," Kilpepper said, moving to let the biologist drag the machine into place.

"Planet," Aramic said again.

"Elam vessel holam cram," the chipmunk-panda said pleasantly.

Damn it, they had a language. The sounds they made were cer-

tainly representational. It was just a question of finding a common meeting ground. Had they mastered simple abstractions? Aramic put down his book and pointed to the chipmunk-panda.

"Animal," he said, and waited.

"Get him to hold still," Simmons said, focusing the X-ray. "That's good. Now a few more."

"Animal," Aramic repeated hopefully.

"Eeful beeful box," the animal said. "Hoful toful lox, ramadan, Samduran, eeful beeful box."

Patience, Aramic reminded himself. Positive attitude. Be cheerful. Faint heart never.

He picked up another of his manuals. This one was called *Language Approach to Alien Grade One Intelligences*.

He found what he wanted and put it down again. Smiling, he held up a finger.

"One," he said.

The animal leaned forward and sniffed his finger.

Smiling grimly, Aramic held up another finger. "Two." A third. "Three."

"Hoogelex," the animal said suddenly.

A diphthong? Their word for one? "One," he said again, waving the same finger.

"Vereserevef," the animal replied, beaming.

Could that be an alternate 'one'? "One," he said again.

The animal burst into song.

"Sevef hevef ulud cram, aragan, biligan, homus dram —"

It stopped and looked at the *Language Approach* manual, fluttering in the air, and at the back of the linguist who, with remarkable patience, had refrained from throttling him.

After Morena and Flynn returned, Kilpepper puzzled over their report. He had the photographs rushed through and studied them with care.

The shaft was round and smooth, and obviously manufactured. Any race that could put up a thing like that could give them trouble. Big trouble.

But who had put the shaft up? Not the happy, stupid animals around the ship, certainly.

"You say the top is hidden in the clouds?" Kilpepper asked.

"Yes sir," Morena said. "That damn thing must be all of a mile high."

"Go back," Kilpepper said. "Take a radarscope. Take infra-red equipment. Get me a picture of the top of that shaft. I want to know how high it goes and what's on top of it. Quick."

Flynn and Morena left the bridge.

Kilpepper looked at the still-wet photographs for a minute longer, then put them down. He wandered into the ship's lab, vague worries nagging at him. The planet didn't make sense, and

that bothered him. Kilpepper had discovered the hard way that there's a pattern to everything. If you can't find it in time, that's just too bad for you.

Morrison, the bacteriologist, was a small, sad man. Right now he looked like an extension of the microscope he was peering into.

"Find anything?" Kilpepper asked.

"I've found the absence of something," Morrison said, looking up and blinking. "I've found the absence of a hell of a lot of something."

"What's that?" Kilpepper asked.

"I've run tests on the flowers," Morrison said, "and I've run tests on the earth, and tests on water samples. Nothing definitive yet, but brace yourself."

"I'm braced. What is it?"

"There isn't an ounce of bacteria on this planet!"

"Oh?" Kilpepper said, because he couldn't think of anything else to say. He didn't consider it a particularly shocking announcement. But the bacteriologist was acting as if he had announced that the subsoil of the planet was one hundred per cent pure green cheese.

"That's it. The water in the stream is purer than distilled alcohol. The dirt on this planet is cleaner than a boiled scalpel. The only bacteria are the ones we

brought. And they're being killed off."

"How?"

"The air of this place has about three disinfecting agents I've detected, and probably a dozen more I haven't. Same with the dirt and water. This place is sterile!"

"Well, now," Kilpepper said. He couldn't appreciate the full force of the statement. He was still worried about the steel shaft. "What does that mean?"

"I'm glad you asked me that," Morrison said. "Yes, I'm really glad you asked me. It means simply that this place doesn't exist."

"Oh, come now."

"I mean it. There can't be life without microorganisms. One whole section of the life cycle is missing here."

"Unfortunately, it does exist," Kilpepper pointed out gently. "Have you any other theories?"

"Yes, but I want to finish these tests first. But I'll tell you one thing, and maybe you can work it out for yourself."

"Go on."

"I haven't been able to detect a piece of rock on this planet. That's not strictly my field, of course — but we're all jacks-of-all-trades on this expedition. Anyhow, I'm interested in geology. There's no loose rock or stone anywhere around. The smallest stone is about seven tons, I'd estimate."

"What does that mean?"

"Ah! You were wondering also?" Morrison smiled. "Excuse me. I want to complete these tests before supper."

Just before sunset, the X-rays of the animals were finished. Kilpepper had another surprise. Morrison had told him that the planet couldn't exist. Then Simmons insisted the animals couldn't exist.

"Just look at these pictures," he said to Kilpepper. "Look. Do you see any organs?"

"I don't know much about X-rays. . . ."

"You don't have to. Just look." The X-ray showed a few bones and one or two organs. There were traces of a nervous system on some of the pictures but, mostly, the animals seemed homogeneous throughout.

"There isn't enough internal structure to keep a tapeworm going," Simmons said. "This simplification is impossible. There's nothing that corresponds to lungs or heart. No bloodstream. No brain. Damn little nervous system. What organs they have just don't make sense."

"And your conclusion —"

"That these animals don't exist," Simmons said, in high good humor. He liked the idea. It would be fun to do a paper on a non-existent animal.

Aramic passed them, swearing softly.

"Any luck on that lingo?" Simmons asked him.

"No!" Aramic shouted, then blushed. "Sorry. I tested them right down to intelligence grade C3BB. That's amoeba class. No response."

"Perhaps they're just completely brainless," Kilpepper suggested.

"No. The ability to do tricks shows a certain level of intelligence. They have a language of sorts, also, and a definite response pattern. But they won't pay any attention. All they do is sing songs."

"I think we all need supper," Kilpepper said. "And perhaps a slug or two of the old standby."

The old standby was much in evidence at supper. After a fifth or two had been consumed, the scientists mellowed sufficiently to consider some possibilities. They put together their facts.

Item, the natives — or animals — showed no sign of internal organs, no reproductive or excretive equipment. There seemed to be at least three dozen species, not counting birds, and more appearing every day.

The same with the plants.

Item, the planet was amazingly sterile, and acted to keep itself so.

Item, the natives had a language but evidently couldn't impart it to others. Nor could they learn another language.

Item, there were no small rocks or stone around.

Item, there was a tremendous steel shaft, rising to a height of at least half a mile, exact height to be determined when the new pictures were developed. Although there was no sign of a machine culture, the shaft was obviously the product of one. Someone must have built it and put it there.

"Throw it all together and what have you got?" Kilpepper asked.

"I have a theory," Morrison said. "It's a beautiful theory. Would you care to hear it?"

Everyone said yes except Aramic, who was still brooding over his inability to learn the native language.

"The way I see it, this planet is man-made. It must be. No race would evolve without bacteria. It was made by a super race, the race who put that steel spire there. They built it for these animals."

"Why?" Kilpepper asked.

"This is the beautiful part," Morrison said dreamily. "Pure altruism. Look at the natives. Happy, playful. Completely devoid of violence, rid of all nasty habits. Don't they deserve a world to themselves? A world where they can romp and play in an eternal summer?"

"That is beautiful," Kilpepper said, stifling a grin. "But —"

"These people are here as a reminder," Morrison continued. "A message to all passing races

that men can live in peace."

"There's only one flaw in that," Simmons said. "The animals could never have evolved naturally. You saw the X-rays."

"That's true. . . ." The dreamer struggled briefly with the biologist, and the dreamer lost. "Perhaps they're robots."

"That's the explanation I favor," Simmons said. "The way I see it, the race that built the steel spire built these animals also. They're servants, slaves. Why, they might even think *we're* their masters."

"Where would the real masters have gone?" Morrison asked.

"How the hell should I know?" Simmons said.

"And where would these masters live?" Kilpepper asked. "We haven't spotted anything that looks like a habitation."

"They're so far advanced they don't need machines or houses. They live directly with nature."

"Then why do they need servants?" Morrison asked mercilessly. "And why did they build the spire?"

That evening the new pictures of the steel pillar were completed and the scientists examined them eagerly. The top of the pillar was almost a mile high, hidden in thick clouds. There was a projection on either side of the top, jutting out at right angles to a distance of eighty-five feet.

"Looks like it might be a watchtower," Simmons said.

"What could they watch that high up?" Morrison asked. "All they'd see would be clouds."

"Perhaps they like looking at clouds," Simmons said.

"I'm going to bed," Kilpepper stated, in utter disgust.

When Kilpepper woke up the next morning, something didn't feel right. He dressed and went outside. There seemed to be something intangible in the wind. Or was it just his nerves?

Kilpepper shook his head. He had faith in his premonitions. They usually meant that, unconsciously, he had completed some process in reasoning.

Everything seemed to be in order around the ship. The animals were outside, wandering lazily around.

Kilpepper glared at them and walked around the ship. The scientists were back at work trying to solve the mysteries of the planet. Aramic was trying to learn the language from a mournful-eyed green and silver beast. The beast seemed unusually apathetic this morning. It barely muttered its songs, and paid no attention to Aramic.

Kilpepper thought of Circe. Could the animals be people, changed into beasts by some wicked sorcerer? He rejected the fanciful idea, and walked on.

The crew hadn't noticed anything different. They had headed, en masse, for the waterfall, to get in some swimming. Kilpepper assigned two men to make a microscopic inspection of the steel shaft.

That worried him more than anything else. It didn't seem to bother the other scientists, but Kilpepper figured that was natural. Every cobbler to his last. A linguist would be bound to attach primary importance to the language of the people, while a botanist would think the key to the planet lay in the multi-fruit bearing trees.

And what did he think? Captain Kilpepper examined his ideas. What he needed, he decided, was a field theory. Something that would unify all the observed phenomena.

What theory would do that? Why weren't there any germs? Why weren't there any rocks?

Why, why, why. Kilpepper felt sure that the explanation was relatively simple. He could almost see it — but not quite.

He sat down in the shade, leaning against the ship, and tried to think.

Around midday Aramic, the linguist, walked over. He threw his books, one by one, against the side of the ship.

"Temper," Kilpepper said.

"I give up," Aramic said. "Those beasts won't pay any at-

tention now. They're barely talking. And they've stopped doing tricks."

Kilpepper got to his feet and walked over to the animals. Sure enough, they didn't seem at all lively. They crept around as though they were in the last stages of malnutrition.

Simmons was standing beside them, jotting down notes on a little pad.

"What's wrong with your little friends?" Kilpepper asked.

"I don't know," Simmons said. "Perhaps they were so excited they didn't sleep last night."

The giraffe-like animal sat down suddenly. Slowly he rolled over on his side and lay still.

"That's strange," Simmons said. "First time I saw one of them do that." He bent over the fallen animal and searched for a heart beat. After a few seconds he straightened.

"No sign of life," he said.

Two of the smaller ones with glossy black fur toppled over.

"Oh lord," Simmons said, hurrying over to them. "What's happening now?"

"I'm afraid I know," Morrison said, coming out of the ship, his face ashen. "Germs."

"What are you talking about?"

"Captain, I feel like a murderer. I think we've killed these poor beasts. You remember, I told you there was no sign of any microorganism on this planet?"

Think of how many we've introduced! Bacteria streaming off our bodies onto these hosts. Hosts with no resistance, remember."

"I thought you said the air had several disinfecting agents?" Kilpepper asked.

"Evidently they didn't work fast enough." Morrison bent over and examined one of the little animals. "I'm sure of it."

The rest of the animals around the ship were falling now, and lying quite still. Captain Kilpepper looked around anxiously.

One of the crewmen dashed up, panting. He was still wet from his swim by the waterfall.

"Sir," he gasped. "Over by the falls — the animals —"

"I know," he said. "Get all the men down here."

"That's not all, sir," the man said. "The waterfall — you know, the waterfall —"

"Well, spit it out, man."

"It's stopped, sir. It's stopped running."

"Get those men down here!" The crewman sprinted back to the falls. Kilpepper looked around, not sure what he was looking for. The brown forest was quiet. Too quiet.

He almost had the answer. . . .

Kilpepper realized that the gentle, steady breeze that had been blowing ever since they landed, had stopped.

"What in hell is going on here?" Simmons said uneasily.

They started backing toward the ship.

"Is the sun getting darker?" Morrison whispered. They weren't sure. It was mid-afternoon, but the sun did seem less bright.

The crewmen hurried back from the waterfall, glistening wet. At Kilpepper's order they piled back into the ship. The scientists remained standing, looking over the silent land.

"What could we have done?" Aramic asked. He shuddered at the sight of the fallen animals.

The men who had been examining the shaft came running down the hill, bounding through the long grass as though the devil himself were after them.

"What now?" Kilpepper asked.

"It's that damned shaft, sir!" Morena said. "It's turning!" The shaft — that mile-high mass of incredibly strong metal — was being turned!

"What are we going to do?" Simmons asked.

"Get back in the ship," Kilpepper muttered. He could feel the answer taking shape now. There was just one more bit of evidence he needed. One thing more —

The animals sprang to their feet! The red and silver birds started flying again, winging high into the air. The giraffe-hippo reared to his feet, snorted, and raced off. The rest of the animals followed him. From the forest an

avalanche of strange beasts poured onto the meadow.

At full speed they headed west, away from the ship.

"Get back in the ship!" Kilpepper shouted suddenly. That did it. He knew now, and he only hoped he could get the ship into deep space in time.

"Hurry the hell up! Get those engines going," he shouted to the gawking crewmen.

"But we've still got equipment scattered around," Simmons said. "I don't see any need for this —"

"Man the guns!" Captain Kilpepper roared, pushing the scientists toward the bay of the ship.

Suddenly there were long shadows in the west.

"Captain. We haven't completed our investigation yet —"

"You'll be lucky if you live through this," Kilpepper said, as they entered the bay. "Haven't you put it together yet? Close that bay! Get everything tight!"

"You mean the turning shaft?" Simmons said, stumbling over Morrison in the corridor of the ship. "All right, I suppose there's some super race —"

"That turning shaft is a key in the side of the planet," Kilpepper said, racing toward the bridge. "It winds the place up. The whole world is like that. Animals, rivers, wind — everything runs down."

He punched a quick orbit on the ship's tape.

"Strap down," he said. "Figure it out. A place where all kinds of wonderful food hangs from the trees. Where there's no bacteria to hurt you, not even a sharp rock to stub your toes. A place filled with marvellous, amusing, gentle animals. Where everything's designed to delight you.

"A playground!"

The scientists stared at him.

"The shaft is a key. The place ran down while we made our unauthorized visit. Now someone's winding the planet up again."

Outside the port the shadows were stretching for thousands of feet across the green meadow.

"Hang on," Kilpepper said as he punched the takeoff stud. "Unlike the toy animals, I don't want to meet the children who play here. And I especially don't want to meet their parents."



I BELIEVE . . . that the technological future is far less dreadful than many of us have been led to believe, and that the hopeful aspects of modern applied science outweigh by a heavy margin its threat to our civilization.

— Dr. Vannevar Bush, *Science Digest*

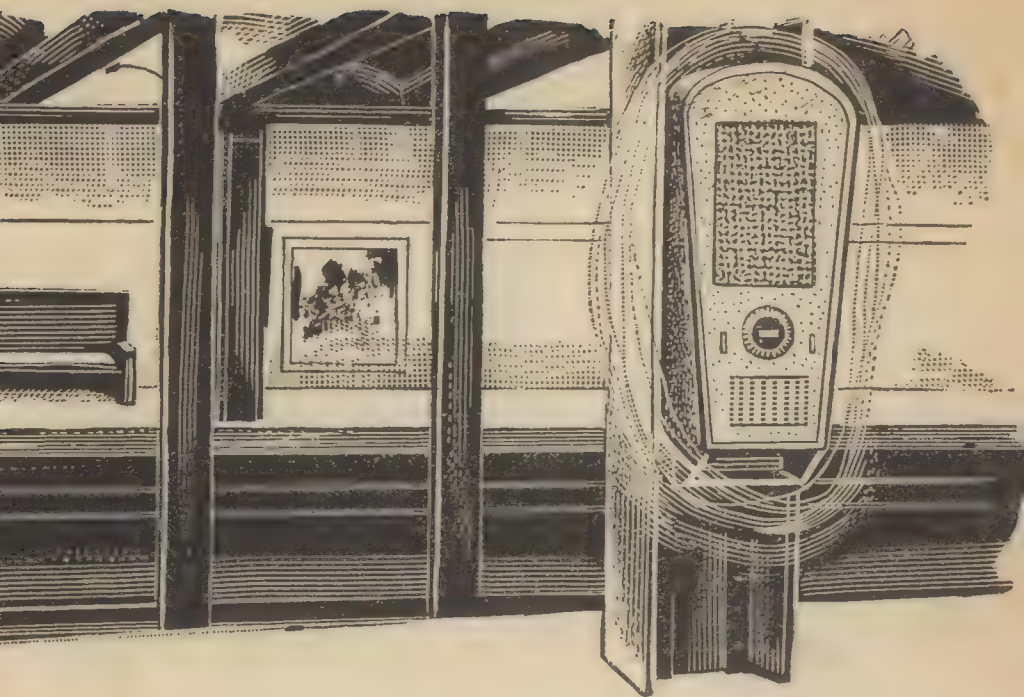


THE COLLECTORS

By **GORDON DEWEY**

On the bus this morning you reach for a dime to pay the fare. Only there is no dime. A couple of quarters, a nickel, four pennies and a trouser button. But that can't be right! You distinctly remember having at least three dimes mixed in with your change. The fact that there's no hole in your pocket is final proof: your memory has played you a dirty trick!

Maybe this never happened to you. But it has to us, as well as to a lot of other people. Absent-mindedness, or is there a more sinister reason? Gordon Dewey, who's been losing too much money lately, comes up with a startling explanation!



Illustrator: Harry Rosenbaum

FRED LOWRY stood before the mirror on the wall of his apartment living room. Gaze attentively fixed on his reflection, he repeated the words, even-spacing them in a firm, determined tone: "I am a methodical man."

He watched his lips move in the mirrored image; heard his voice clearly, distinctly. Perhaps it was a bit louder than normal, perhaps slightly more emphatic; but there was no lack of his customary preciseness of enunciation.

He seated himself again at his little desk, then, convinced that

there was nothing wrong with him. He knew what he was doing. He underscored that mentally.

Nevertheless, there were the figures. His own daily records did not lie. Somewhere, somehow, during the day, fifty cents had disappeared from his pocket.

And this was not the first time.

He spread out his records for the past ten days, adjusted his desk lamp to shed an even illumination over them. It had happened every day. Except last Sunday—he'd stayed in that day. Each night, when he recorded his expenditures for the day and

balanced them against his cash-in-pocket at the starting of the day, there was a discrepancy. It had never happened before.

Fred Lowry never lost anything, never misplaced anything, never spent a cent that he could not account for. His earnings, to the last penny, were recorded in his personal account books. His spendings, to the last penny, even to computation of sales tax, were efficiently distributed in his books of account. His monthly trial balances always worked out accurately.

He looked around the apartment. The shelves of books were in orderly precision — he knew where each book belonged on the shelves, and each book was in its place. Every piece of furniture in the room was placed for the most efficient utilization of the available space. In one corner stood a file cabinet. In its drawers reposed his correspondence and other records, each item exactly where it should be.

Fred Lowry was a methodical man.

But now he was both puzzled and annoyed. He turned back to his daily records, examined them searchingly once again.

This time he noted something which he'd missed at first. There seemed to be a correlation between the missing sum, each day, and the amount of money he'd

started out with. He made some rapid calculations, and was even more incredulous.

Roughly, his shortage approximated ten per cent, day after day. If he started out with ten dollars, a dollar, or a little more or a little less, could not be accounted for at night. If he started out with five dollars, from forty to sixty cents would be missing.

It looked as though he were being — tithed!

Lowry leaned back in his chair, uttered a short, nervous laugh which was not a laugh. The sound of it punctuated his unease.

If he were a religious man, he supposed that he would tithe, faithfully giving ten per cent of his earnings to the Church. But he wasn't; and he resented *being* tithed. If that was it. He shook himself in annoyance. This was silly — but there it was, in black and white, in his own handwriting: each day ten per cent of the money in his pockets had vanished.

To add to his irritation, there was no ledger account in his books to absorb either miscellaneous losses or gains. He had never needed one. He was a methodical man.

He pursed his lips meditatively, gazing off into space. Then, coming to a sudden resolution, he began to move swiftly, purposefully.

Gathering up the records, he

placed them in precise order by date, clipped them together, and attached a bit of note paper to the bundle on which he wrote, with pen and ink, in his neat book-keeper's hand: "Pending — out of balance." Then he pulled open the top drawer of the desk, placed the bundle in the lower right corner, taking care not to disturb the arrangement in the drawer, and carefully closed it so that the edges of the drawer did not protrude beyond the frame of the desk.

Then he locked the drawer and tested it to be sure that it was indeed locked.

Pushing back his chair, Fred Lowry got to his feet. In his mind was the determined resolve to go into this tomorrow, and somehow find out where and how and why he was being relieved — he thought of it that way — of a little money each day. He knew he was not losing it, nor spending it unaccountably. There was only the one alternative: it was being taken from him. It had to be that way. That, too, was impossible — but there it was.

But wait! Why not do it tonight? If it happened in the daytime — if it happened at all — might it not happen just as readily one time as another? *No time like the present*, he reminded himself wryly. That motto, along with others like "Do it now," "It is later than you think,"

"Don't say it, write it," "A place for everything and everything in its place," was posted at a strategic spot in the office where he worked.

He emptied his pockets on the desk. Everything. Money, keys, cigarettes, wallet, notebook, pen and pencil, lighter — the works. Then he examined each pocket with meticulous thoroughness. There were no holes.

He replaced everything in his pockets, except the money — loose change and wallet — and his notebook and pencil. There were a five and two ones in the wallet. Opening the notebook to unused facing pages, he recorded that fact on the left page, checked the wallet again, to be sure, and replaced it in his hip pocket. He buttoned the pocket flap securely, and checked that.

From a small cash box which he took out of another drawer of his desk, he added coins to those from his pocket, to make, with the banknotes in his wallet, a total of ten dollars. He recounted it to preclude any possibility of error.

In his notebook he recorded the change: three halves, four quarters, three dimes, three nickels, five pennies. Total, ten dollars. He put the money in his pocket. On another slip of paper he made a duplicate of the money record in his notebook, noted the date and the time on it, put the

duplicate record in the cash box, relocked the box and returned it to the desk drawer.

Then he simply sat there for several minutes turning the matter over in his mind, searching for any possible flaw in his plan, examining it for either improvement or for a possible better course of action.

At last he snapped off the desk light, got up, put on his hat and coat, and checked his wrist watch against the time on his electric desk clock. They agreed.

He left a floor lamp burning, then gave the apartment a quick once-over. Except for the lighted lamp, everything was just as it would normally be, if it were morning and he were leaving for work.

He picked up the notebook and pencil from his desk, walked to the door and opened it. Then, on the page facing the money record in his notebook, he made a terse entry: Left apartment, 10:50 P.M., \$10.00.

Closing and locking the door behind him, he left the building and walked briskly to the bus stop. Here he checked his money again, counting it carefully, and made another entry in his notebook: Bus stop, 10:58 P.M., \$10.00.

He had to wait longer than usual — the buses did not run as often this late at night as they did during the day. The cool night air

felt good on his face, and there was the perfume of night-blooming flowers threading through the light breeze. Overhead the stars struggled against the glowing nimbus of the city at night. There was no moon.

A few sleepy birds, in nearby trees, talked over the day's events — and then the bus, a yellow-eyed glaring monster, tires swishing on the pavement, pulled up to the stop and Fred Lowry boarded it.

He dropped twenty cents into the till box and found a seat. There were only two other passengers — this time of night most persons would be going away from the city, not toward it. Lowry frowned. For the purposes of his test he would have preferred a packed bus with only standing room left.

He made another entry in his notebook: Bus, 11:16 P.M., 20¢. He counted his money. So far so good. He had nine dollars and eighty cents left. He recorded that on the cash record side of the notebook pages.

Step by step, as he made his way to the office building where he worked, he recorded time and expenditures, painstakingly checking his remaining cash at each point. At the subway stop; as he boarded the subway; as he left it. At the cafeteria, where he ordered a breakfast he did not want and barely touched.

He signed the night register in the lobby of the office building — this too was a deviation from the daytime pattern, but it couldn't be helped, of course. He got on the elevator and said "Eleven" as it started upward.

The night watchman eyed him curiously. "Working late tonight, sir?" he asked.

"Just remembered something I had to check," Lowry replied, using what he hoped was a casual tone. "Getting close to the end of the month, you know."

"That's right. . . . Here's your floor, sir."

Fred Lowry unlocked his office door, entered, switched on the lights, hung up his hat and coat, and went directly to his desk and sat down. Turning on his desk lamp, he checked his record. So far he had spent one dollar and thirty-seven cents. He should have eight dollars and sixty-three cents left. He counted the money: Right. So far, then, everything was as usual.

He thought about himself, tried to sort out his feelings. No apprehension, no tension, no foreboding — not one thing could he feel that was different from, say, what it would be if he were here at his desk, at nine in the morning, on a regular work day.

He spread out some papers, flipped the cover off his calculator, lit a cigarette, and went through the motions of doing some work.

Presently he went out, rang for the elevator, told the watchman as they descended to street level that he would be back soon, and at the dairy lunch where he always ate he ordered a sandwich he didn't want. But he paid for it — breaking the five-dollar bill this time — and drank the coffee he ordered with it.

Back in his office, he checked his records and cash again. Still nothing missing. He went through the motions of some more work, then replaced the papers neatly in his desk, put the cover back over the calculator, checked his money once more, put on his hat and coat, locked the office and left the building, signing out on the way out.

At the station where he left the subway on his way home, everything still checked. Still no shortage.

He went up to the bus stop, sat down on the bench and waited. He was disgusted with the whole business by now. Nothing had happened. Conditions were wrong, that's what was the matter. No crowds. Maybe in crowds someone had been picking his pockets. But for pennies? That hardly made good sense. Maybe in busy restaurants he had been short-changed — the five-dollar bill he used in the dairy lunch had been an invitation. But not enough people around — no one would try a hold-out unless

crowds were pushing him along.

Well, it had been a good try.

Half-heartedly, while waiting for the bus, he checked his pockets once more. A plan was no good unless one followed through on it. But he'd been the sole passenger to alight from the subway; he'd met no one either on the platform, on the steps to the street, or from the subway entrance to the bus stop. No other person was waiting for a bus. So obviously there was no chance for any money to disappear.

He was seventy-five cents short!

Suddenly excited, alert, blood pounding in his ears, he counted his money again, slowly, with scrupulous care. The bus came, paused, and went on — he was scarcely aware of it.

There were six dollars and fifty-eight cents in his pockets: the notebook record showed that there should be seven dollars and thirty-three cents.

Somewhere, seventy-five cents had vanished!

He sat there stiffly upright, tense, searching his memory of the past few hours. Yes, he could recall every time he had handled money, had spent it, how much, and for what. The record was accurate, according to his recollection. Those factors checked out.

His balance had been correct just before he left the subway — there was the last entry: Leave subway, 2:44 A.M., \$7.33.

Somewhere, then, between the platform and the bus stop, seventy-five cents somehow had left his possession. Not stolen; no pocket picking — he'd met no one, seen no one. So, he lost it. He looked for the hole in his pocket. No hole. Still . . .

He was on his feet, retracing his steps, peering searchingly at the sidewalk, the pavement, the steps as he followed them back down to the subway platform, the platform itself. Every crack, every corner, every cranny. Maybe a grating? But there wasn't one. Just bare concrete. Nothing else. No place for a coin to hide. No coins.

And now Fred Lowry began to feel something disturbingly akin to fear. This time he had some feelings to sort out. And he didn't like what he sorted. Money just did not vanish like that, in a sane world. No trained investigator could have kept closer tab on his movements, on the handling of his funds, than had Fred Lowry this night.

He heard the *click-clack* of nimble feet coming down the steps, the *tap-tap* of high heels as she came toward him where he stood near the edge of the platform. He turned, looked her over very deliberately.

She swerved somewhat away from him, flushing, and her chin went a little higher.

Lowry found himself wondering about her. It was late. Had she been working until this hour? Been to a party, maybe? What time did she have to get up in the morning? It reminded him that there wasn't much time left for his own sleeping; he'd better call it a night.

The girl was young, not more than twenty-two, Fred guessed. Well built, slender. Not a beauty, but definitely on the nice-looking side. Nice firm features. You could see that she knew her way around — the right way.

She was peering past him into the murk of the tunnel. He found himself listening with her, but there was no tell-tale humming of the rails to herald the approach of a train.

She walked past him, not seeming to avoid him, but it was there. He felt that he could understand how it was with her — a girl and a strange man alone on a deserted subway platform. Sure, she'd be watchful.

He kept his eyes on her as she reached the end of the platform, hesitated, then turned and started back. She stayed near the tunnel wall, studiously avoiding a meeting of their eyes. Lowry knew that she knew that he was watching her.

He saw the sudden veer she made toward the recess in the wall. There was something in there—he couldn't quite make

it out from where he stood.

But he could see her actions clearly enough. She opened her purse, took out a wisp of bright blue cloth, reached in again and brought out some coins.

Then she moved closer to the alcove, and now he could see that it was a vending machine she faced, almost hidden in the dimness of the recess where it had been placed. She dropped several coins into the machine, put the rest back in her purse, stuffed the blue handkerchief in also, and snapped her purse shut. The sound of the snap seemed magnified in the deserted underground.

Fred Lowry felt that quick alertness tingle through him again. The girl was walking away from the machine toward him; and as she came closer he felt certain that the bright vitality of her face was dimmed as though with a thin film of — what?

Quickly deciding, he moved forward to intercept her.

"Excuse me —" he began, not liking the approach, but unable to put his tongue to a better opening.

She paused, looked at him with no sure expression on her face, a touch of not-quite awareness in her eyes.

"Forgive me, but — well, I saw you put coins in the machine. You didn't get anything out. I thought if it were stuck . . ."

Sudden expression, aliveness,

flooded back into her face, awareness into her eyes. She stared at him a moment, shook her head uncertainly, started to walk past him.

Fred Lowry felt his face getting red, knew his best course was to let it go. He persisted, doggedly. "I mean," he stammered, "you — you —"

She whirled to face him, angry annoyance in her eyes. "Look, mister!" The words were clipped. "Guys like you —" As suddenly as it came, her anger subsided, giving way to an almost-twinkle in her eyes. "Okay, I'll play it out with you. *What machine?*"

Lowry felt the rebuff, felt the rebuke, did not like being laughed at. "Seriously, Miss, I wasn't trying to — well . . . suppose we just skip it." It was his turn to be dignified.

Again the girl shook her head, and a little frown creased her brow. "You *seem* all right," she said, eyes searching his face intently. "But I didn't put any coins in a machine. What machine are you talking about?"

He pointed to the alcove, and her gaze swung to it as he told her: "You walked over to that machine. You opened your purse. You took out a bright blue handkerchief. Then you took out some money, dropped coins in the machine, and walked away from it. You didn't get anything for your money — you didn't wait

to see if anything came out."

The frown came back to her face. "I do have a sample of bright blue cloth in my purse — it's *not* a hanky. But I haven't had it open since I left the turnstile."

He stared at her. "One of us is kidding one of us. . . . Okay, if that's the way you want it."

He could have sworn that she was sincere, but — He half-turned away from her.

"Wait!" Her voice was low, almost pleading; her hand light on his arm. "I don't know how you knew about the blue cloth — I could, I suppose, have snapped my purse open and shut without thinking. . . . But I certainly did *not* go anywhere near that gum machine!"

"But I saw you . . . Hey! Hold on! *Gum machine?*" Taking her by the arm, he led her nearer to the alcove, to a point where the machine was clearly visible. "Gum machine? That's a cigarette machine!"

The anger was back in her voice. "All right, Buster," she snapped. "A joke's a joke, but this one isn't even funny. That's a gum machine. . . . Besides, I'll prove it to you. Even if your story is correct, I don't smoke. So what would I be doing putting money in a cigarette machine?"

Suddenly everything clicked!

Lowry had his problem; he had his answer. And a bigger problem

now began to take its place.

At least, now he knew where his missing money had gone, for whatever that was worth.

He narrowed his eyes, looked at the machine, *saw* it. Unobtrusive.

The blood was singing in his ears again as Lowry, feeling an edgy curiosity, walked toward the machine.

He was facing the girl, walking toward her. There was bewilderment on her face. And the hint of a smile, mostly on the lips. The eyes were grave, wary, definitely disturbed.

"You do make your points," she said. "Is that just the way you claim I did it?"

"Did what?"

"Are you serious? You said you saw me drop some coins into that machine, then walk away from it without getting anything for my money." She laughed, mirthlessly. "Neither of us will get rich this way."

He stared at her.

He had been going toward the machine. Then he was facing the girl — he could not remember getting close to the machine. . . . He eyed it moodily. This thing could be — was — dangerous.

While the girl watched him with faint amusement on her face, Fred Lowry counted his money. Five dollars and ninety-three cents! Another sixty-five cents vanished!

He shook his head. "I — what

did I do? What goes on, anyhow?"

"You walked over to the machine. You took some coins from your pocket. You dropped them in the slot. Then you walked away from it — you didn't wait for whatever you bought. . . . Do you chew gum?"

"No! It's a cigarette machine. I don't remember — being near it."

"One of us," the girl said mockingly, "is kidding one of us."

Lowry's voice was almost a whisper. "I saw you put some coins in it. I don't remember putting any in."

The girl looked at him searchingly. "This could be a fine practical joke, for strangers. . . . Let's pretend for right now that we aren't strangers. I'm Sally Chamberlain —"

"I'm Fred Lowry."

"— and I saw you put money in that machine. I don't remember putting any in myself."

"Hmmm. And neither of us took anything out of it — neither of us waited to find out."

They looked at the machine.

"Cigarette machines," Lowry said musingly, "are usually wider than that."

"It's a gum machine!"

"Now look," Lowry said, impatiently. "You keep saying it's a gum machine."

"It is. And I don't smoke."

"And I don't chew gum. Scout's honor, now; do you really see a

gum machine? Tell me — do you?"

Sally nodded. Her face was pinched, frightened.

"Okay — I see a cigarette machine. But let that part go for now. We both agree that it's a machine, at least?"

The girl nodded again.

Lowry said: "Then watch me."

He started toward the machine. There was a gasp from the girl — Sally. He felt the skin crawling on his back. He kept on walking.

He was facing the girl, approaching her.

Lowry counted his money. Five dollars and twenty-eight cents — this time the bite was fifty-five cents. He looked at Sally, raised an eyebrow.

"You dropped some coins in the machine."

He tried to remember being close to the machine, but it was no use.

"How did I act?"

"Normal. Except for not getting anything for your money, and not waiting to see what happened."

"What happened?"

"Nothing." She came closer to him, stood beside him, her arm touching his. "I don't understand." She shivered, her arm trembling against his.

"I could make a guess —"

The look in her eyes told him to go on.

"Well, suppose . . ." He hesitated. When it came right down

to wrapping it up in words, it was pretty far-fetched.

"Yes?"

Then the words came in a rush. "You don't drop in more than a little at any one time. Two or three coins. A small percentage of what you're carrying, say ten per cent, or less, even. Not so much that you'd ordinarily notice the dent in your cash —"

"But that happens to me all the time." She was clutching his arm tightly now. "I'm sure I have a dime, or a nickel, but when I look in my purse it isn't there."

"Of course!" He remembered all the times in the past days when he had less change than he *had* to have unless he'd been short-changed, or had dropped coins he'd never heard fall. "It happens to everyone." He remembered people staring at coins in their hands, looking for coins they knew must be there, digging again into pocket or purse, coming up without them.

"Okay," he said. "Suppose there are dozens — hundreds — thousands of these machines. Spotted where not more than a few persons would be likely to see them at any one time. Out of the way places, but busy enough — like this one. Waiting for one person at a time."

Her laugh was shaky, forced. "Certainly a gum machine couldn't —"

He flicked a glance at the one

standing serenely in the alcove.

She didn't finish the sentence.

"Suppose," he went on, "there is something in the machine. A mechanism. Maybe something like a radio transmitter working with a battery. Controlling people's minds when they come near enough. Making them put a few coins in the slot, not many; then making them go away and forget it completely. Tithing them!"

"But surely — Who would do that?"

Lowry shrugged. "Who wants money?"

He tried to imagine people behind the machines, behind the thousands of machines. He saw men going about with canvas bags collecting the take, filling them; counting rooms with big hoppers into which the coins were fed; machinery sorting and adding and totalling. And the machines spreading — the city, the country, the world!

He realized that she was talking.

"I said: 'We don't *have* to do anything about this, of course.' But — but I think we should do *something*."

"What?"

"We could tell someone. Report it. The police . . ."

"Sure." He grimaced. "They'd have you in Observation after the first hundred words!"

"But someone ought to —"

"How would you like to try

convincing someone? It might be interesting."

"I see what you mean." She shivered again, and her fingers dug into his arm. "I can't really believe this when I'm here. When I know."

"You know?"

"That you weren't kidding me."

He found her hand, took it in his. "I wonder —"

"Yes?"

"I wonder how many people the machine can control at once. Suppose we both go over. Could it make both of us drop money in the slot? We'll count our coins, then see how much we have left after we've blanked out and come to again. . . . See if its control is strong enough to make us both forget."

She looked up to him, eyes luminous. "Fred —"

"Yes . . . Sally?"

"I'm frightened."

"What is there to be afraid of? It's only a machine. Let's see if it can take money from both of us. . . ."

She nodded, squeezed his hand. He liked what he saw in her eyes.

Together, hand in hand, they walked over to the machine, the quiet, waiting, unobtrusive machine there in the shadowed alcove.

They stopped in front of it.

They were still standing there when the collectors came.

Mr. Noah Webster, always a fast man with a word, gives several definitions in his famous book for Passion. Among them are the following: "Ardent affection for one of the opposite sex; love . . . sexual desire; lust . . . an object of love, deep interest, or zeal."

Naturally, we have no idea how much time Curtis Casewit gives to the study of his dictionary. But within the space of a few pages he has put together an unforgettable bit of fiction which does more to define passion than anything Mr. W. could come up with in a month of Tuesdays!



TRANSFUSION

By CURTIS W. CASEWIT



WARMTH in the air; sunshine felt through the still closed lids; tires humming a tune on the remote mountain road. Slowly she awoke (Paul, Paul! Where are you?), her eyes opening, kindling, turning toward him. *Him*. "Hello, Paul."

Silence.

Suzanne's cheek bones were aglow already. "Hello! I slept.

How long did I sleep, Paul?"

Paul didn't answer. His left hand held the wheel while the right rested on the seat-cover beside her.

"How long did I sleep?"

"An hour. Two. What do I know?"

She gazed at his hand and at the patch of light playing on his veins and at the tiny hairs. It was like

a hypnosis, this hand. Her fingers slid toward him. She felt his fleeting wish to withdraw.

She shuddered.

(Paul, please! Come back!)

Presently she turned her head. The Alpine scenery was unrolling itself as if from a spool: below, the mint-colored valley; a toyland of houses; miniature cattle grazing amid a blue splash of flowers.

Flowers. "Look, Paul!"

She gazed at his face: deep lines from underneath his eyes to the angular jaw. A shadow of ennui.

Flowers, losing their petals. No — no, I mustn't.)

"And over there —" (She hadn't given up.) "Please, look! The snow is steaming, Paul. Why?"

"Why? Why?" he mimicked. "The heat, of course. Melts the snow. The last snow." He turned toward her. "It melts, like everything. Everything passes."

(It melts. Like everything. Everything passes. Oh God, Paul, why do you say this?)

The car climbing; the constant swish of rubber on asphalt. Trees flitting by. Young trees. Saplings. And higher up: dead trees.

She asked him why the trees were dead and he said that storms killed them. In his curt way he began to elaborate on the storms: how the heat brought clouds and how these clouds gathered — all because of the excessive heat — and how all at once jagged

lightning struck the trees. . . .

He went on driving, quietly. Suzanne pondered about what he had said. She began to grasp the meaning of his words: the melting snow, the dead trees: a melting of her three-day-old marriage, and its death. They had known each other for a whole year; he always wanted her; waiting, he had been good to her. She had held her senses back, yes, accumulated her passion, as it were. Their marriage then — and the dam broke loose, its boiling waters drowning him. Ah, he spoke of drowning! The dam was by no means empty.

Her eyes went on watching him. How she loved the unruly blond hair, the muscular neck. She stared at him now, at his shoulders, the strong naked arms. And his hand.

His hand. She wanted to touch it again. Temptation tore at her. For an instant she fought, then yielded. His hand curled into a fist. The wall of silence wedged between them.

After a while: "What is it, Paul? Oh, please, what is it? I feel it now. What have I done? I'm crazy about you —"

"Too much perhaps."

She had not heard him; he had breathed, not spoken these words. Besides, there came the sounds of cowbells from outside her window. She saw mountains again and glaciers, far away, as if at the end

of the world. They were on a dirt road now. Furious serpentines; a summit, seen, unseen. Little lights kept dancing in her eyes; she edged closer again, sliding her hand under his arm. Her warm breath was on his cheek again.

"Suzanne! You mind? I'm trying to drive."

Haze over the peaks ahead; menacing clouds sailing above the haze; curious patterns of light and darkness on his face. Two anguished miles on a plateau; two miles down, curves, curves.

Flames again.

Control yourself. Even higher flames, longing, clutching at her.

Suddenly she leaned over him, kissing him on the mouth.

It all happened within a split-

second: he jerked his head to the left, then to the right, unable to see; and now his eyes closing and hers still open: the speedometer plummeting to zero. He kept at the wheel frantically, but the scenery had already burst into a dozen chaotic fragments, like the vision from a banking airplane, and amid a fracas of glass and metal she had the faint consciousness of the machine careening down the hill.

When Suzanne came to, her lungs were filled with dust and the strong smell of gasoline. She felt a numbness in her bones and the blood trickling down her arm. She tried to move and was overcome with horror that she couldn't. She managed to turn her head and found Paul. He was lying at a



"She loves me, she loves me not . . .

distance and breathing heavily.

Her lips quavered. "Paul . . . Paul!"

The sound of a church bell came up plaintively from the valley. Otherwise, everything was quiet.

She heard a gasping sound from his throat now and saw his hands, his hands clawing the dried grass underneath him, his chest heaving up and down.

The wind came up, and then a first raindrop followed by another one. Rain. She slowly found the strength to prop herself up. Where was her shoe? Ah, there, a yard away. She crept to it and put it on.

Seat covers ripped to shreds; pieces of chromium scattered around him. He was coiling in agony. A film of sweat and water on his forehead, his chin quivering, his hands still boring themselves into the ground.

"Wait, Paul. Wait! Get you a blanket. . . ." She staggered to the car and pulled one out. It was raining steadily now; she heard the drops on the automobile, felt the chill through her silken blouse.

"Here. Under your head, Paul."

He winced. She grasped for his pulse; it was weak. Gurgling sounds from his throat; the heavy breathing from his chest.

All at once fright crawled through her, spread within her bosom like a spider, like a huge spider trying to get out, invading her skin now. She shivered. Blood was leaving her head. Dizzily she

left him, climbed up past the car through boulders and dwarf pines, up to the road.

On the road she shrieked for help. But there was no one. Mountains resembled the bellies of wild animals; pitch sprayed over the sky.

When she got back to him her legs were shaking.

His head lay very still now, the blond hair on the soaked blanket. She knelt down and opened his shirt. Her hands trembled and water dripped down her fingers. She lowered her ear into his chest. His heart did not beat anymore.

She sought his pulse. "Paul, Paul! Answer me!" His pulse was quiet; his face all waxen glossiness. She thought of a cigarette, fumbled in her pockets for one, and



"May I trouble you for a match?"

sheltering it from the rain placed it between his lips. She lighted it twice, with jerking motions. The cigarette fell from his mouth, soggy.

Frenzy beset her then. She was shaken with tears. As if dying herself, she leaned over the inert body, clutching his hand. The dam opened, the floods sprang forth: she was burying her head in his chest now, passion swept over her again, every fiber of her body went to him now. She stroked his hair. Desperate tenderness. She cradled his head in her palms; she gazed at him as if seeking his very depth — his missing depth. Before long she was covering his wet face with kisses. Her lips parted, her eyes closed, she went on doing this, again and again, murmuring things.

All at once she felt a remote movement of his pulse. Then a flutter, and presently a clear beating. At the same time, ever so lightly, his chest began to move up and down. With rapture, she buried her ear into his open shirt: the first stir of his heart now. His eyelids trembled, then opened. Her lips rushed over them.

"Paul, Paul," she babbled.

And then the sensation. The sensation of her own heart beating slower, slower, still slower, as if it might stop altogether; the feeling of her whole body emptying itself, and the drained remainder

leaving her too. She felt the stiffening of every muscle and the sudden gooseflesh on her skin. It was like a trance, icy, uneven. And now the heartbeat in her ears . . .

"Come," he whispered.

She had heard him. She did not move.

"Come," louder now.

She could not respond. She had given all of her very self to him while reviving him; now there was nothing left but the hollow specter of her ardor.

She had risen and stood over him, aloof. She saw him writhe toward her, his eyes widening, the mouth gashing open, his body coming to life, trying to rise now, hands groping blindly. Gruesomely distorted, she met her own glowing self in him.

That — that was her?

"Come, little dove, I want you —"

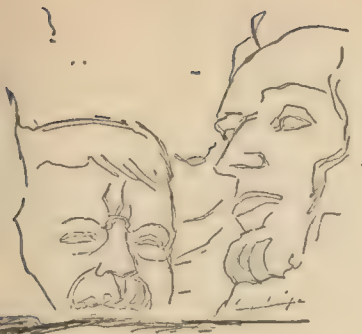
The sting of his nails in her arm. His thumb, viselike, held against her. His hot breath was on her cheek until she jarred herself loose, fleeing.

"Suzanne! Come back!"

She didn't understand. As she ran, fright ran with her and her heart was missing every second beat — the heartbeats she had given him.

Finally she stopped. The sky was a dirty rug now, and at a distance glaciers shone again like sharpened guillotines.





THE DAY THE GODS FELL

By IVAR JORGENSEN

When John Gutzon Borglum carves, in rock-ribbed majesty, the faces of Washington, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt high on the side of Mount Rushmore, he left not only an imperishable monument to the past, but what could easily become an awesome puzzle to generations yet unborn.

At least, so Ivar Jorgensen suggests in this compassionate study of mankind's return to the stone age as a result of one World War too many. In a society where clubs and spears have replaced the hydrogen bomb, there are sure to be wise old men like Kropor . . . just as there must be bewildered youngsters who can't separate the truth from superstition. The question is: where does superstition leave off and wisdom begin?

IT was Dorn's day of manhood, the most important day of his life, and he was up very early standing in front of the village looking up at The Faces.

The Faces had always meant a great deal to him. But now they seemed to have greater significance than ever before, proving, as they did, that the Sodakans were

a chosen tribe, a privileged warrior clan. They alone lived in a place hallowed by The Gods; the one place in all the great land where The Gods had carved their own images into the rock of a great mountain.

A lump arose in Dorn's throat at the thought of his being a Sodakan. There were many large and

fierce tribes in the land. The Nodakans, the Misotans; the Nebraskaans and the Misourans to the south. And further west the proud Wyomans, Idoans, and Montanans.

And — said Kropor, the learned priest of the Sodakans — there were many other tribes in the land. Kropor had things called Books, handed down to him from his priestly forebears, and in these Books were strange markings which — it was said — gave knowledge to those who could interpret the markings. And Kropor was one of these.

Kropor said the land stretched far in all directions and that there was a sacred number — 48 — this being the number of the tribes in the land.

Dorn had sat often at the feet of Kropor, even since early childhood, and had listened to his many stories. But of all Kropor's stories, Dorn liked best those dealing with The Gods.

Many many generations ago, only Gods lived in this land. They were young and virile Gods. They came across wide waters to this land because of a dispute with other Gods and they made this the Chosen Land.

They had powers which we can understand but dimly. They built great dwellings that reached high into the sky. They were not bound to the land, but rode over it in great shining craft. They took the lightning out of the sky and used its

power to drive these craft through the air and also across the land at great speeds along ribbons of smooth stone which only The Gods could have caused to be.

And as a sign of their Godhood, they carved The Faces into the vast side of a mountain, here in the land of the Sodakans. This makes the Sodakans a tribe chosen of The Gods, as The Faces are the one true symbol left of their —

"I envy you, Dorn."

Dorn turned quickly to find his friend Zoodor standing by his side in the dawn. Dorn smiled and said nothing.

Zoodor sighed. He was still a year from manhood and looked forward also to the time he would come of age; when he could fight the surrounding tribes; when he could take to himself a mate, as Dorn would this day take Gora.

"Gora is very beautiful," Zoodor said.

Dorn turned his head to look toward the far side of the village; toward the houses in which the young females were kept and closely guarded. He had often seen Gora walking with the others inside the fences, and on the day of the selection she had been brought before him along with several others and he had picked her out. He had seen the joy and promise in Gora's face and now he looked forward to the hour, not far hence, when she would be given to him.

Zoodor was also thinking of Gora and — being on the most intimate terms with Dorn — he said, "What do you think it will be like?"

"I don't know."

"They say it is wonderful when you take your woman into the hills for the first time."

"Perhaps. But there are more important things about reaching manhood than taking a woman."

"What could be more important than that?"

"The glory of being a Sodakan, for one thing. We are the chosen ones of The Gods, Zoodor. Only in our land did they leave their images; only on our mountain did they carve The Faces. All the tribes have women. All the tribesmen, when they come of age, take a female into the hills." Dorn stood now — tall and proud — looking up the Sacred Mountain. "But only the Sodakans have The Faces."

Zoodor looked curiously at his friend. "You always were a serious one, Dorn. You never talked much about women with the others. Always The Faces and The Gods and the glory of being a Sodakan. Kropor says you are the greatest among us — that some day — because you have wisdom — you will be our Chief. . . ."

"It is whispered among the youths that Kropor's final lesson to you will not be the ordinary one but what to do with the woman in

the hills, how she must be treated gently and not hurt or killed."

"I have heard nothing about my final lesson. What will I be told other than that?"

Zoodor shrugged. "No one knows. But tell me, Dorn, do you really believe what Kropor tells us about the past?"

Our Gods were not the only Gods in existence. But ours were the greatest and the most powerful. They had magic such as to make the other Gods look puny. Our Gods wanted only to live in peace, but the other Gods — with weak magic — were jealous of ours.

"Why shouldn't I believe it? Don't you?"

In order to defend themselves from the jealous ones, our Gods built great weapons which they could carry across the sky and drop upon the cities of the others.

"Do you believe about the cities? How could there have been places where for miles around the sky was filled with dwellings that reached clear up to the sky? How could there have been boxes that would freeze rock-hard even in the warm season? How could they talk to each other further than a man can shout and be heard? Do you believe all that?"

"Of course I believe," Dorn said sternly. "And so do you. We know The Gods could do anything. Nothing was beyond the power of their magic."

Zoodor continued puzzled: "Then why did they leave? And if their magic was all-powerful, why did they let the other Gods drop weapons on their cities and turn them into great stone piles?"

"That was all explained by Kropor. There were certain traitors who gave the magic of our Gods into the hands of their enemies. Too late, our Gods discovered this and there was a great war. The skies were darkened by the war craft and all our land and all the other lands rocked from the thunder and lightning of the war. Our Gods defeated the enemy, but after the war was over our Gods were sad and no longer cared to live in this land. So instead of rebuilding the great cities with their magic, they built instead craft greater than any that had been built before and went up to live among the stars."

Zoodor of course had heard all this many times before. These things were the tenets of religion. All people believed them and Zoodor would not voice a doubt except to his closest friend. He said, "I guess it is all true because only The Gods could have carved The Faces."

"Of course it is all true. And only we Sodakans have The Faces of The Gods in solid stone on our mountainside."

Zoodor's mind wandered from these weighty topics. "Tonight," he said, "you will take Gora into

the hills." His eyes were veiled and he spoke dreamily. "You will remove her clothing and . . ."

But Dorn, not wishing to discuss such things, was striding off into the village.

Dorn hardly touched his morning meal. His mind was too full of thoughts relative to the new life he was entering. Suppose in a few days the Nodakans sent an army to attack the Sodakans and take their food and women? He would fight against them for the first time. He would stand valiantly in the front line and wield his club along with the other men of the tribe. In his first battle he wanted fiercely to acquit himself well. He would smash a dozen skulls, possibly, and bring home an enemy hand, hacked off with the sharp edge of a rock. And later he would be allowed to enter battle with a better weapon — one of the sharp sticks you could drive right through an enemy's body.

Dorn thrilled at the thought — the holy thought of protecting his land from an invader.

But now the time had come to give over dreaming — the time to sit at the feet of Kropor and hear from him the final words of instruction which all youths were given on the day of manhood.

He found the fragile, gray-headed priest seated in his dwelling. Dorn entered and dropped down cross-legged at his feet. Many times he had sat at Kropor's

feet, and this would be the last. It made Dorn a little sad because he loved Kropor and was grateful for all the wisdom he had received from him.

Kropor sat looking down at Dorn for a long time, and finally Dorn said, "I have come for the last instructions."

"Yes," the aged man replied, "but this last ritual is so unnecessary — so futile. Men know instinctively what to do with women. And men are not beasts. They cherish the mates they take to themselves."

"Then you do not intend to tell me —"

Kropor leaned forward and placed his hand upon Dorn's young shoulders. "No, my son. I am going to tell you something far different. Long I have taught you, and long I have waited for this day. I have watched closely through the years, hunting for a youth of mind and ability — one to lead his people out of their ignorance and superstition."

"I don't understand."

"Only with a strong leader can our people start up the long hill out of this darkness into which they have fallen."

Dorn looked more bewildered than before, and Kropor went on: "My son — a great deal of what I have taught you — and the others — is untrue."

"Untrue?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you teach it to us?"

"Because, Dorn, a long time ago our people suffered a great shock. Those who survived were left broken and bleeding on the ground. All they had was taken from them. Death rained down from the sky and no man had a home or anything to eat. All he had left was the fear that drove him into the hills to crouch behind rocks and in holes and the forests."

"That was the War of the Gods. You told us of it."

"Yes, Dorn, but I hid the truth. I changed it around as all the teachers before me have done. In the generations which followed that great war, man lost his knowledge and even a great deal of his ability to comprehend. He would not have believed the truth, so it was distorted into a fairy tale because even children can understand fairy tales."

A vague uneasiness stirred in Dorn's heart. He had the feeling this was sacrilege somehow. But he could only listen to Kropor. And, strangely, he wanted to listen.

"And, after generations of untruth had passed, the truth became dangerous. People did not want to hear it. They only wanted to hear their fairy tales repeated, because all men must have a sense of security, and the greatest sense of security comes from doing what your ancestors did and their

ancestors before them. To believe as they believed and to live and die as they did."

"Why shouldn't we live and die as did the great Sodakans before us? That is our way of life."

"But it is a bad way, Dorn. It brings no progress. In order to rise and have better things we must think our own thoughts. We must so live and strive as to be better men than our ancestors were."

Dorn could not quite follow all this, and he was still uneasy. But his curiosity was greatening. "And now you are going to tell me of this truth?"

"Yes, Dorn. The time has come when our people must be led out of ignorance and you must be their leader."

"Then what is the truth?"

"That there were no Gods."

Dorn's senses reeled. It was almost as though Kropor had raised his arms and cursed the ancient and honorable Sodakans who had fought and died to save this land from the surrounding enemy tribes. Even worse than that. *He had said there were no Gods!*

Dorn started to get to his feet, but Kropor pushed him down and went on: "My son. Man is always prone to attribute that which he cannot understand to the Gods. And because we would be unable to carve The Faces upon the mountainside, we tell ourselves The Gods did it."

"The Gods *did* carve The Faces.

You have often said so yourself."

"But only through fear did I tell such lies; through fear of the people's wrath. The Books say differently, and the Books are right. Those we know as Gods, Dorn, were men like you and me. At one time they too were ignorant like ourselves, but they thought as men of tomorrow, not men of yesterday, and so they found knowledge. They learned all the seemingly magical things man can do. He can harness the elements to work for him. Our forefathers did this. They learned gradually — one little thing — then another little thing — and they would not be blinded by superstition. They built ships to sail on the sea and under the sea. They built the craft that sailed through the air. They learned to talk to each other over wires at a great distance, and finally how to talk over great distances without wires. And even to send pictures of each other, so those far away could see and hear them even though they were in some other place."

Dorn's heart was beating like thunder in his ears. "But The Faces! I could not make them. You could not make them."

"No. Because we are without the knowledge, the artistic ability, the great machinery which these early men made to do their will."

"Then there was no great war and The Gods did not sail away to

live far out among the stars?"

"There was a great war, Dorn, because these men, while having godlike knowledge, did not have godlike wisdom. They turned their great learning, through greed and fear, into paths of destruction. They created weapons so powerful no nation could stand against them."

"True, but they were Gods —"

"No, Dorn! No. They were men. And when the great war was over these men had all but destroyed each other. Only a few miserable humans escaped — not to fly up to the stars, but to run shrieking into the forests and the rocks. Man was through, but mankind survived to begin again; to send their children out of the holes and from behind the rocks to look again at the wide world. The children lived in fear and needed something to give them comfort. They needed an explanation of things they could not understand. Hence, they made up the story of The Gods."

"Only men," Dorn muttered dully.

"Only men — like you and me. And if mankind is again to rule the earth and the seas and the skies, they must have a leader with the courage to tell them the truth. You must be one of those leaders, Dorn."

"Today," Dorn replied, "was to be the happiest of my life. The day I would become a man and

take my woman up into the hills. The day I would become a warrior and fight the battles of the Soddakans."

"It will be a greater day, my son. You must teach our people that war is futile. Continuous fighting beats men down. Only through love and through a joining with all the tribes in peace can we again be great."

Dorn had spent many hours wandering through the hills remembering Kropor's words. Not until sundown had he returned to the village. This was indeed a strange day of manhood, because Gora was still in the place of women and there had been no mating.

But there had been other great excitement. Even now, in the darkness, Dorn could hear the death-cries of the false priest Kropor. He could see the firelight dance and hear the yells of the men who were stoning the priest to death.

Scarce an hour had passed after Dorn told them of Kropor's lies before they dragged the old man out and began the killing.

Dorn did not like the sound of Kropor's cries. He had known the old priest too well, and it was like listening to the agony of a friend.

But this of course was wrong. No friend, Kropor, but a liar and a blasphemer.

(Continued on page 162)

THE BIG FREEZE

By **BOYD ELLANBY**

And now we'd like to present Sam Baracol. You never heard of Sam? Buccaneer Baracol, the scourge of statesmen, the baiter of bureaucrats? The round little man who can make an honest, if slightly discolored, penny out of nothing at all? Why, we thought everybody knew Sam!

Here is his latest adventure — the best possible introduction to a genius who knows more angles than a mathematics major. It deals in such unrelated objects as clay pigeons, sun dials and dinosaur bones, bustles, pink umbrellas, croquet balls and the ceiling price on tin. Put them together, add a low temperature reading on the thermometer, and you'll have one of the zaniest and most ingenious hunks of chicanery in recorded history!

OF THE many things in the universe that Sam Baracol detested, it was boredom he hated most.

Sam sat alone at his table, irritably fingering the green paper cap he had not bothered to put on, touching the shiny tin horn he had not bothered to blow, and reflected that New York night-clubs were dull places. But not so dull, he hastily reminded himself, as open Space, or a hotel room.

Only a few people lingered at the untidy tables, finishing their

drinks or sipping coffee as they tried to sober up enough to get home. Long ago, whistles had blown and bells had rung to usher in the year 2100, and along with the other customers Sam Baracol had hoisted his bulky figure to an upright position when the orchestra played Auld Lang Syne, and had lifted his champagne glass in a vague toast.

There was nobody on Earth whom he particularly wanted to toast, and nobody in the galaxy either, for that matter. Sam was



a wanderer; he never stayed Earthbound long enough to make any emotional ties. So he had saluted, mentally, the peculiar madness of the stubborn archaists on Aereopagis III whom he had opposed with such disappointing lack of success on his last ramble among the stars, and meditated regretfully on their mania for living in a facsimile of the early twentieth century, a mania which had shut him out from as profitable a deal as he had ever schemed for.

But in rejecting the benefits of the last thousand years of technology were they really so mad, he wondered, as he set down his glass. Closing his eyes he could feel again the quietness of Aereopagis III where no telecast ever interrupted a conversation, and except at the one secluded port no jet ever screamed through the skies. He could see the pretty white houses which would never be made dingy by smoke, the sheep on the distant hills, the rolling meadows yellow with wheat, the velvet grass lawns where in the afternoons white-flanneled men strolled beside ladies who raised frilly parasols against a gentle sun; where they picnicked under shade trees or amused themselves at old-fashioned games with balls, and were never molested by the harsh reproof of a park warden or a scowl from a passer-by.

The crash of a cymbal woke him. He looked around to find that the orchestra were packing their instruments ready to go home, and silent waiters had slipped into the empty spaces of the room and begun to clean up the debris of New Year's Eve. Sam hated to be left alone. He sipped at his drink and, with sudden petulance, he flicked his knuckles against the shiny horn and knocked it to the floor.

A waiter pattered over and stooped to pick up the horn, looking at Sam resentfully as he dusted it off. "What'd you do that for, mister? You might have bent it so we couldn't use it next year."

"A pure accident, I assure you, waiter."

"It didn't look like no accident to me. I happened to see you bang it off the table, on purpose like. Here we go to the trouble to provide real, genuine, tin horns for New Year's Eve, expecting our customers to appreciate it, and what do they do? Some of them try to slip them under their capes and sneak home with them, and some just knock them around as careless as if they was plastic."

Sighing, Sam reached for his wallet. "There, there, waiter, don't start crying. After all, tin is cheap."

"It ain't the expense, mister. It's the trouble. If you only knew

what it was like trying to get some released from the Commodity Bureau!"

"Ah, yes, our wonderful, omniscient, omnipotent Commodity Bureau. How I love them!"

"You must be drunk, sir," said the waiter, gently polishing the horn as he moved away. "Better be getting home to bed."

"Presently. Presently."

At the bar along the wall the barkeeper set down a bottle, yawned, and switched on the telecaster behind him. The milky screen came alive and a bleary-eyed newsman materialized, his voice booming out in the middle of a word.

"—erature around minus ten degrees. Sleet or snow ending about noon today.

"Flash! Price controls were removed today from clay pigeons, dinosaur skeletons, and sun dials. The Stabilization Office of Commodity Bureau stated that none of them are important in the economic life of the United World.

"Flash! The World Naval Expedition to Gallipolis VII has just reported —"

A roar of laughter billowed from somewhere in the room drowning out the grating voice of the newsman. Sam jumped at the sound and turned completely around in his chair to look.

Three tall men sat at a bottle-littered table against the wall.

They roared, they howled, they rocked back and forth, punched each other in the ribs, and gasped for breath as tears rolled from their eyes.

Sam cocked his head, listening, then quickly drained his glass, set it down, and moving as lightly as a bobbing balloon he stepped over to the noisy table, drew up a chair at one corner and sat down.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said. "My name is Baracol, Sam Baracol. Would you be kind enough to tell me what it is that amuses you so much?"

The men stopped laughing and three pairs of swimming blue eyes stared at Sam.

Sam was a short, pudgy young man, whose body swelled down and out from his chin, just grazed the table-top, and curved sharply back to his thighs. Scanty brown hair fuzzed above his forehead like the down of a chick, and his mouth was wide and full-lipped. He looked as amiable as a fat brown teapot, but his small gray eyes were alert.

"Do we know you?" said one of the men.

"Not yet," said Sam, smiling in a friendly way. "But you musn't resent the intrusion of a stranger, gentlemen. On New Year's Eve, aren't we all friends? I'm curious to know what you find to laugh about in this monotonous world. And I have a

constitutional aversion to stifling my curiosity."

"Well," said the tallest of the three men, "if you put it that way, I guess we don't mind telling you. You heard that newscast just now?"

"I did."

"Well, I suppose you'll find it hard to believe but, as a matter of fact, that announcement has just turned us into bankrupts. All three of us."

"Hmmm," said Sam. "And is that funny?"

The man doubled over in a new paroxysm, and wiped his eyes. "Don't you think so?" he said.

"As a matter of fact, no."

"But think of it, man! Think of the wild, incredible coincidence! The mere thought of clay pigeons, sun dials, and dinosaur bones being bracketed together is enough to make you smile. And when you further realize that, dissimilar as these things are, lifting the price controls will bankrupt the three of us at one stroke, then you ought to be rolling in the aisle. Why, it stretches the laws of chance to the ultimate. Such a combination of events wouldn't happen again in a million years!"

"I doubt that it's happened even now," said Sam thoughtfully. "Would you explain?"

"Certainly. But first let me introduce ourselves. We are the

three Hardlan brothers, Marcus on my left, Verus on my right, and myself, Fabian Hardlan. Our father, I regret to say, was a classics scholar. Well, we come from three corners of the continent to meet tonight for our first reunion in a year, and what happens? We go bankrupt. I know you won't believe this, Mr. Baracol, but it just so happens that my brother Marcus is the world's one remaining manufacturer of clay pigeons, my brother Verus just happens to be head of one of the two firms that still manufacture sun dials (the other is in Tibet), and I just happen to be the discoverer and promoter of one of the richest pits of dinosaur bones that's ever been found in the world. Now do you see why we're laughing?"

Sam Baracol scratched at the downy fuzz on his head. "Well, no. Your story is peculiar, I'll admit. But it's scarcely amusing."

An uncertain frown creased Fabian's forehead, and the euphoric smiles began to fade from the faces of his brothers.

"You don't think it's a joke to become a pauper, even when it happens in triplicate?" he pleaded. "Like three men slipping on three banana peels?"

"Well, no. I've always thought money was nice to have. But are you sure of your facts? I should think that instead of becoming

paupers, you would now all become millionaires, since there is no regulation to hold down the prices you may charge for clay pigeons, sun dials, and dinosaur skeletons."

"Oh no, Mr. Baracol. Don't you realize that there is practically no market for our products? There hasn't been for some years. Stabilization Office has kept the prices artificially high on the occasional sales we have made, but without its support they will fall close to zero. Clay pigeons are used only for an archaic sport, which none but wealthy eccentrics ever indulge in any more. And who uses a sun dial these days, except to ornament a garden, or as a stage prop in an old-fashioned drama? And as for dinosaurs, well, the museums are glutted, filled to the windows. No sir, you behold three paupers before you. Why, we can't even afford another bottle of champagne "

"Let me remedy that situation," said Sam. "Waiter!"

As the cork popped and the glasses were filled, Marcus spoke for the first time. His smile had drooped into melancholy, and he shook his head. "You know, boys, maybe this man is right. Maybe it isn't so funny after all."

"I have often meditated on the amazing decisions of our Commodity Bureau," Sam remarked, "and marvelled at the all but incredible decisions they make.

If a commodity is scarce, and therefore valuable, they hold the price down to rock bottom, thus discouraging increased production, and they then monopolize the entire output for themselves. If a thing is plentiful and is widely produced, they keep the price sky-high so as not to hurt the bank accounts of the producers.

"It has long been obvious to me that ninety-eight per cent of the Bureau staff are nincompoops — but not a hundred per cent, we must remember. The elephant, it has been said, dances badly; but we are forced to admit that he does dance. This particular decision, on the face of it, is without logic or reason, and if I had not met you gentlemen I should not have thought twice about it, but would have ascribed it to the predominant idiocy of the Bureau. Having met you, however, and being constitutionally unable to swallow a coincidence the size of a camel, I am moved to ask you, bluntly: what have you got that Commodity Bureau wants?"

The Hardlan brothers stared at him.

"Come again?" said Fabian.

Sam's shrewd gray eyes were thoughtful, his voice as mealy as a magazine salesman's. "I mean, and you will see it for yourselves after you've recovered from tomorrow morning's head-

ache, that the Bureau didn't just reach into a basket at random, pull out clay pigeons, dinosaur skeletons, and sun dials, and take off their price ceilings. If these things aren't important to the national economy, why bother with them at all? It can't matter what prices they bring, one way or the other. But it does matter to the Hardlan brothers. It takes away their bread and butter. Therefore, my friends, I repeat: what have you three got that the Bureau wants?"

Fabian moved uneasily, Marcus and Verus shifted their eyes, and they all three sighed.

"He's right," said Verus.

"Of course," said Marcus.

"We should have thought of it," said Fabian. "To be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Baracol, we are, all three, metallurgists by training, particularly in the field of substitute metals; and it is our misfortune, besides, to be highly gifted in our profession — probably the most talented men on the continent."

"Indeed?"

"And ever since we abandoned our professions several years ago, the Bureau has been hounding us, urging us back into harness. They've tried persuasion, appeals to our patriotism, and even bribery."

"And what, specifically, do they want you to do?"

"They want us to make a

substitute tin," said Fabian miserably.

"Tin?"

"Yes, a tin substitute, something that will have the properties of tin. They have kept pointing out — as if it mattered to us — that the earth is running out of tin, that much less than one ten-millionth of the earth's crust contains the metal, and that it is nearly all gone. They would be delighted to have any one of the forms, any one of the ten isotopes, that we could concoct. It is our duty, they say, to use our great talents to provide a tin substitute."

"Well," said Sam reasonably, "isn't it your duty?"

"But lab work is so monotonous!" said Fabian. "Try this mixture, try that mixture, try the next mixture, day after day! Life is short, and we didn't want to spend it juggling precipitates, so we simply resigned and chose the most useless, little-needed occupations we could find that would still yield us a bare living, so that our time would be our own to use as we liked."

"You amaze me," said Sam, "but you have my sympathy. I know a group of colonists on Aereopagis III who have exactly the same irrational wish."

"I wish them luck," said Verus sadly. "But for us, there's no use struggling any more. We have to eat. Back to the lab for us."

"Not necessarily," said Sam, "now that you have met me. Just give me a minute to think. I'm a great one for ideas. Waiter!"

"Sorry, sir," said the waiter. "But it's after four o'clock and the boss wants to close up."

They looked around. Most of the lights had been turned out, and the place was empty except for an undistinguished man who sat at a table near the door, his chin in his hands.

"Then we had better go," said Sam. "Will you gentlemen permit me to stroll along with you? We might perhaps have a nightcap at some more friendly establishment while we continue our talk."

"Thank you," said Fabian. "I'm just beginning to realize how unpleasant it will be to be sober. But I must remind you, we're broke."

"That may be. On the other hand, your situation interests me, and when Sam Baracol is interested, he usually gets an idea. And Commodity Bureau has never done me any favors that I remember. Come, my friends."

They slipped on their overcapcs, pulled on their hoods, and walked to the door.

The nondescript man waiting at the table jumped up as they approached and cleared his throat. "Just a minute, Mr. Hardlan!"

The three brothers turned their heads in unison. "Well?"

"My boss has got a proposition for you."

Fabian shook his head and turned up his cape collar. "We have no comments to make for Newsbureau."

"But I'm not from Newsbureau, Mr. Hardlan. Don't you remember me?"

Fabian looked him over from head to toe. The man was dressed in a brown cape, brown shoes, brown neck scarf, and his large-pupiled eyes were brown. His sallow face was mottled with red, and he wore an anxious, puzzled expression, slightly resentful, like that of an overgrown school boy confronted for the thousandth time by a difficult question and an unsympathetic teacher.

"I never saw you before in my life," said Fabian coldly, "but I don't like your face."

"You didn't like it before, either, Mr. Hardlan; it gets this way, sometimes, in cold weather; but that's neither here nor there. Surely you remember me? My name's Engstrom, and I parlayed with you a few months ago about getting back to the lab, but you wouldn't talk business. But now, I thought to myself, surely you'd be ready to listen to me."

"No comments for Newsbureau," said Fabian stubbornly.

"But look, Mr. Hardlan, it would be to your advantage —"

Pushing the three brothers through the door, Sam turned

carelessly to the stranger.

"It is even more to their advantage, my friend, that they have met me. My name is Sam Baracol, and I feel the stirring of an idea. Happy New Year!"

It was just turning daylight when the man in brown got out of the elevator and walked into a dark office, on through a doorway camouflaged as a water cooler, and on into a windowless room, softly lighted, with soundproof walls.

The sharp-faced man at the desk looked up from his papers. "Well, Engstrom. Where are they?"

"In a bar — in an automat — maybe in jail. How do I know? They wouldn't talk business, Mr. Blake."

"Then you didn't put it to them right, or else they're crazier than I thought."

"I did my best, Mr. Blake."

"Don't they know they're cleaned out?"

"They know, all right."

"What do they think they're going to use for money from now on?"

"Search me, Mr. Blake. Some little guy got in ahead of me, that's all. Said he had an idea, and he simply took the Hardlans and put them under wraps."

"Who was he?"

"Don't know. He just said that his name was Sam Baracol and

that he had a big fat idea."

"Buccaneer Baracol!" said Blake. "The last I heard of him he was on Mars, in Canal City. That's bad. Still . . ." he tapped his pen thoughtfully against his sharp white teeth, "I don't think even the Buccaneer wants to be stuck with supporting the world's leading producers of clay pigeons, sun dials, and dinosaur bones, indefinitely.

"Keep a watch on them, Engstrom. I'll be willing to bet we have those Hardlan boys back in the lab within six months' time, thankful for any kind of a job. I'll think up some other scheme. There's more than one way of skinning a cat, you know."

"That's what people say," said Engstrom doubtfully. "But I never could figure out more than one."

"Nobody asked you to," snapped Blake. "Just keep tabs on those men!"

It was not difficult to keep track of the Hardlans.

For the next six months, the production of sun dials zoomed to a record high. Verus and his two helpers settled down in Maine to an eighteen-hour schedule of crushing gravel, setting molds, and etching in the faces of the dials. Marcus lived at his kiln near the Arkansas clay pits, shovelling out his brittle discs by the dozens, day after day,

and Fabian in his pit in Wyoming lovingly picked and chiselled and brushed the mammoth dinosaur bones, working harder than he had ever worked in his life before.

For Engstrom and his two assistants from Commodity Bureau, these were the six dullest months of their lives, one man in a country farm house near the gravel pit, one in a country hotel in Arkansas, and Engstrom himself in a chilly shack in Wyoming. There was never anything new or exciting to report back to New York, and there was nothing for them to do but look on as the undisturbed Hardlans worked.

The brothers produced their goods, paid their bills, and seemed entirely unaware that no market existed for their products anywhere in the world. Then, suddenly, towards the end of June, they shut down production. They tidied up their work places, housed their various products in suitable warehouses, padlocked the premises and again converged on New York, still followed by their wearied observers. They met at their hotel, drank a mutual toast, then arm in arm the three brothers walked into the sunny street and entered a travel bureau.

"We'd like some literature on travel," said Fabian.

"Where to?"

"Give us all you've got. South America, Europe, Asia, the solar planets, the galactic systems."

"But some of those trips are very expensive, sir!"

"I dare say," said Fabian nonchalantly. "But within a very few days we expect to have money to burn."

Their pockets stuffed with literature, they returned to their hotel and locked themselves in their suite.

Engstrom left a man on watch and then dutifully reported to Commodity Bureau.

"But it just don't make no sense," he concluded his synopsis. "It don't add up."

Blake stared at his desk, blinking his sharp eyes. "Things always add up if you know what figures you ought to start with. If you start with two and two and get five, that simply means you've left out a figure somewhere along the line."

"Maybe so," said Engstrom. "I never did understand arithmetic very well."

Sighing, Blake closed his eyes. "And they expect me to run an organization like Commodity Bureau with the help of dolts like you!"

"No need to call me names, Mr. Blake. You give me a job to do, I do the best I can, I can't do no more."

"I don't doubt it. Well, we'll just have to hunt for that missing figure, that's all. And there's one thing I'd like to know. What's become of Sam Baracol?"

Sam Baracol was reclining in a deep wicker chair on the porch of a clubhouse, sipping a glass of lemonade filled with cracked ice, and looking over the wooden railing at Lake Contrary, the most beautiful lake on Aereopagis III. His downy hair was fluffed by the breeze, and he gave a dramatic, nostalgic sigh.

"I sympathize with you, Mr. Mayor," he said. "This planet is indeed a paradise. Eternal summer, no irritating animal or insect life, gentle rains, soft winds — a veritable garden spot in the galaxy!"

The Mayor beamed and folded his hands. He wore tightfitting gray trousers over spatted white shoes, a massive gold watch chain which spanned his yellow vest, and long moustaches which curled down from his complacent mouth.

"Earth hath not anything to give more fair, Mr. Baracol," he said, waving his hand towards the view.

At the lakeside, ladies modestly dressed in the puffed sleeved and bloomed bathing costumes of 1900, their faces sheltered under cartwheel hats of straw, shrieked as they daringly touched toe to water. On the lawns, long-skirted ladies and straw-hatted men decorously struck croquet balls towards wickets and, at a distance, gentlemen in white flannel trousers cast horse-shoes at a stake.

"It is indeed beautiful!" said

Sam. "No, I hardly wonder any more, Mr. Mayor, that you refuse to jeopardize this peaceful scene by opening up your planet's tin deposits. It's true, of course, that the deposit is the richest I've seen in my years of wandering about the galaxy, and that it lies beyond the mountains and hundreds of miles from your delightful garden city so that it could not possibly corrupt the innocence of this Arcadia. But even granting all that, still I am at last convinced, in part by my first visit to you a year ago, and even more so by my present visit, that it would be sacrilege to take even the slightest risk of altering this enchanted Eden. It is almost the real thing. It is indeed all but a paradise!"

The Mayor bristled and sat up straight. "And what do you mean, Mr. Baracol, *almost* the real thing? I'll have you remember, sir, that my great-grandfather founded this colony in the pioneering days of galactic travel; life on Earth had become disgustingly crass, mechanical, and unaesthetic. It was his life-work to reproduce here, with the help of sympathetic friends, the actual life and culture of the golden age of the world. 1910! The time before atomic power, the time before the great wars, the time before space travel, the time before — abhorrent thought! — the United World. What age was

ever happier than the early 1900's? When was life more serene? Never, sir! And all of us, the descendants of those first dedicated colonists, will keep the tradition to the death. We seceded, sir, from Earth, and we have never regretted it. And yet you have the effrontery to call our colony 'all *but* a paradise.' What more, sir, could you ask?"

"I do beg your pardon," said Sam. "I would not for the world offend such delightful hospitality as yours. It is my misfortune, I confess, to be constitutionally unable to speak any way but frankly. But I beg your pardon and we'll say no more about it."

"That won't do. Explain yourself, sir."

Sam set down his lemonade glass apologetically. "Well, since you press me, Mr. Mayor. As you say, this place is indeed perfect, and if I weren't constitutionally unable to settle in any one spot, I'd probably apply for citizenship here myself. But alas, that is not to be thought of. There are a few little things that have been bothering me, however, a few touches of verisimilitude which seem to be lacking. But then, of course, they are hardly worth mentioning, and I should never have brought them up."

"Mr. Baracol, you have gone too far. What do you find lacking?"

"Well," said Sam, "for one thing, I regret to notice that all of you depend on mechanical clocks to tell the time by. Very efficient, of course, but I can't help feeling it — not precisely an anachronism, of course, but a little out of keeping with the spirit of the place — that you harbor these conspicuous, noisy objects in your pleasant rooms. How much lovelier it would be, for example, if the green lawns and gardens here were dotted with graceful sun dials, twined with ivy, blending into the landscape."

"True," said the Mayor, looking out at the velvet lawn. "But making a sun dial is a skilled operation. None of us would know how to mark the dial."

"And then," said Sam, warming up, "there's the matter of the games you play. Croquet is healthy, dignified exercise, and so is throwing horseshoes, and so are the graceful calisthenics of archery. But I should think that some of your more venturesome spirits must at times long for a more dashing, a more vigorous outlet for their skills. Skeet-shooting, for example, a gentlemanly diversion which had many devotees during the first half of the twentieth century. Ah, there's a sport! How thrilling it is to watch the graceful gray disc soar into the air, to swing the gun, and with clear eye and unerring marksmanship to shatter the clay

pigeon neatly out of the air."

The Mayor looked pensive. "I've always fancied my own marksmanship, as a matter of fact. Few men, I think I am safe in saying, would surpass me."

Sam nodded. "I don't doubt it in the least, sir. And then there is one other thing, which I really hesitate to mention to a man of your background and lineage, but you asked my frank opinion, you know."

"Don't be afraid, Mr. Baracol. We pride ourselves, remember, on our appreciation of a man's integrity, however clumsy his manner."

"Thank you," said Sam. He hesitated then, pulling his vest over his rounded stomach. He drank the last of his lemonade, twirled the glass round and round in his plump fingers, avoiding the avid eyes of his companion.

"Well, get on with it, man! What else is lacking to our colony?"

"A sense of the past."

"What do you mean?"

"Where are your beginnings? Earthmen of 1900 could look back on centuries of development, on millenia of evolution. But your colony here began from scratch, with the coming of your great-grandfather and his friends, a mere hundred and fifty years ago, to a perfect habitation. But to a planet, alas, which boasted only of vegetable life. You have there-

fore no continuity with man's past, but have sprung full-blown from the sea of Space. When your children ask you about man's history, you are unable to take them to a softly lighted museum and show them the actual remains of man's ancestors — the fossils. Think, Mr. Mayor, how much more complete, how much more poetic it would be if you could lead them to that massive room under the skylight and show them the skeletons of dinosaurs!"

From one of the club rooms behind them sounded the brassy gong of a grandfather's clock striking the hour. The soft notes of the cuckoo called four times from the parlor, and at the same instant a set of chimes tinkled into a complex melody.

"Four o'clock," said Sam. "Time for me to be getting back to the port. My ship will be ready for take-off."

The Mayor frowned and moved impatiently in his chair. "Don't hurry away, Mr. Baracol. It's odd, you know, but I never noticed before how noisy clocks can be. Won't you have another lemonade?"

"Well," said Sam. "Just one for the skies, then."

Glass in hand, he sauntered to the railing and gazed out towards the rolling expanse of the lawns, then shook his head and sighed.

"Perhaps you'll join me for my last stroll, Mr. Mayor? Green

is such a beautiful color," he added, as they walked slowly over the grass of an empty croquet ground. "Especially in this sunlight."

The Mayor did not answer. He was looking thoughtfully at the long shadow cast by Sam's portly figure; absently he picked up a mallet, swung idly at the striped ball and watched its swift roll through a distant wicket.

"What an amazing shot!" said Sam. "Just as I suspected, you would have made an expert marksman back in the good old days. Few would have dared take you on at a match."

The Mayor coughed, looking sidewise at Sam. "I've been wondering, Mr. Baracol, if you might not be willing to do a favor for us the next time your business takes you to Earth?"

Sam beamed. "Anything at all, my dear sir. Anything within my powers I can do — you have only to command. Shall we turn back now? For I must be on my way."

"Then could we commission you to purchase and ship us a moderate supply of clay pigeons, sun dials, and dinosaur bones?"

"I should never have mentioned them," said Sam, sighing. "I would do anything in the world for you and your colonists, Mr. Mayor, but not even Sam Baracol can perform the impos-

sible. Perhaps you do not realize that for centuries sun dials have been made only for ornament? And that clay pigeons were used in a game which has long been obsolete? And as for dinosaur bones . . ." He shook his head regretfully. "Not that I won't do my best, of course."

The Mayor whacked a second croquet ball with such force that it rolled out of sight over a hillock. "It was unkind of you, Mr. Baracol, to point out flaws in our life here which cannot be corrected, and thus, so to speak, to introduce a triple-headed serpent into our Eden."

"It was indeed," said Sam. "I shall never forgive myself. I should never have mentioned such trifling imperfections in your paradise. But even if by some remote chance I should happen to locate those items for you — and I shall certainly try — I'm afraid the problem of payment — forgive my mentioning it — would finally defeat us. Since you have seceded from Earth, so to speak, you probably have no currency which would be acceptable in exchange."

The Mayor smiled. "If that is the only problem, we have nothing to worry about."

"Good! I'm happy to hear that."

"I can arrange to turn over to you our entire crop of wool for sale on Earth."

They were ascending the steps

to the porch as Sam shook his head. "I'm afraid that won't do," he said, reaching for his hat. "I'm afraid you scarcely realize how far our technology has progressed, sir. There's no market for wool anymore. Everyone uses the synthetic fabrics. Much sturdier, you see, and then we don't have the bother of keeping sheep."

"There's our wheat crop, of course."

"No, I'm afraid that would also bring you very little. Since the irrigation of the African deserts, wheat has become as cheap as paper. No, Mr. Mayor, I'm afraid, just as I suspected, that the problem of payment will defeat us. But you have no reason to look so depressed. Your country is still beautiful, without these other objects, and in this world, after all, we are not to expect perfection."

"Bong, bong, bong, bong, bong!" sounded the grandfather's clock.

The Mayor jumped.

Sam held out his hand. "Good-bye, sir. This has been a most delightful visit, which I hope to be able to repeat perhaps in five or ten years." Turning, he strode towards the door.

"Just a minute, Mr. Baracol!"

Sam paused. His heart was thudding, but he put a bland smile on his face as he turned.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor?"

"Do you suppose," he said

slowly, "that you would be able to pay for the sun dials, clay pigeons, and dinosaur bones, with a suitable commission for yourself, of course, if we granted you a concession to open up our tin deposits?"

Sam took his trembling hand away from the door. "What a brilliant suggestion, sir. How did you ever manage to think of it?"

New York in July can be very hot, and by the end of a week the Hardlan brothers were thoroughly wilted and impatient. They knew their travel folders by heart, and had decided just where to go. Verus would go to the Andes, pick up a guide and a couple of llamas, and immerse himself in the sole remaining dominion of primitives. Marcus would go to the eastern Mediterranean to survey the few surviving examples of Byzantine architecture. But Fabian had chosen to go to Mars.

The time of waiting seemed very long but at last, one evening late in July, just as they were finishing a nightcap at the hotel bar dutifully watched by the weary Engstrom, in walked Sam Baracol, plump as ever, his little eyes sparkling with satisfaction.

"My friends" he said beaming. "Let us call for champagne!"

They huddled round a table, and with the second bottle Sam glanced around the room and

proceeded promptly to business.

"As I agreed, gentlemen, I am prepared to give you a substantial payment on account for the produce you have waiting for me. It is ready, I trust?"

"Ready and waiting as per agreement," said Fabian. "But I'd still like to know, Sam, what in the world you are going to do with the stuff?"

Engstrom hitched his chair a little closer and sipped his beer. Sam looked at him speculatively.

"How do you do, Mr. Engstrom? As an old acquaintance, won't you allow me to buy you a long cool drink, tinkling with ice, before I proceed?"

Engstrom flushed as he shook his head. "Thanks just the same, Mr. Baracol, but I prefer beer. Ice makes me break out in bumps, like, sometimes."

"You astonish me," said Sam, in a puzzled voice. "But let us to business. As to what I am going to do with the stuff, Fabian, I have no objection at all to telling you. It is really a very simple arrangement. I am going to part with your entire output of sun dials, clay pigeons, and dinosaur skeletons, in exchange for a tin mine on a distant planet."

"And now I'll tell one," said Fabian.

"I am amazed at your skepticism! Have you no faith in Sam Baracol?"

"Well, I won't press you. But

what will you do with the tin after you've mined it?"

"I hope I shall find a buyer, of course. What else could I do?"

"But Sam, the Stabilization Office keeps the price of tin down so low that you'll be selling it at less than cost. You'd be crazy."

"Have you never heard of the black market?" said Sam, nudging him in the ribs. "But I will not involve you. Ah, it is a beauty of a mine! A nearly pure oxide, a rich cassiterite. It will be very little labor for me to smelt down the ore with carbon, draw off the liquid, and cast it into molds. Lovely, gleaming bars of tin . . ."

"Are you serious?"

"Certainly," said Sam, his eyes twinkling. "I am constitutionally opposed to levity of any kind where money is concerned. And I shall, of course, consider it only proper to share my profits with you three. How soon, by the way, shall I have the melancholy duty of wishing you bon voyage?"

"We're leaving next week," said Fabian. "And I want to express right now the gratitude of all three of us for keeping us out of the laboratory and making it possible for us to enjoy life. I certainly never dreamed I'd get as far as a trip to Mars."

"Mars? An interesting planet, and Canal City is a thriving little industrial community. I usually try to stop there on my way out and back when I can manage the

time. You'll enjoy it. But take plenty of clothes with you, my dear Fabian. It can get mighty cold there."

Canal City itself could not have been colder than the atmosphere of Commodity Bureau when Engstrom made his report of Sam's reunion with the three brothers.

"So the Hardlans are leaving the continent," said Blake accusingly. "Did you see them buy their tickets?"

"Yes, Mr. Blake. But how could I stop them? That Mr. Baracol must have given them the money." Engstrom's sallow face was worried and anxious. "One's going to the Andes, one to Arabia, and one to Mars."

"They might as well be going to the end of the galaxy for all the good they'll do us now. I've spent nearly five years trying to get those men to do their plain duty, and they always slip away. What are we going to do for tin?"

Engstrom slapped his knee and snickered. "Ask Mr. Baracol."

"What's he got to do with it?"

"He said he had a tin mine. What a line that man has! I didn't pay too much attention, but he was telling them some crazy story about how he had got hold of a wonderful tin mine in exchange for those old bones and the other stuff, and was going to sell it on the black market. But he didn't take me in for a

minute. I'm not that dumb."

Blake opened his mouth and closed it. He pounded his desk. "You're incapable of judging how dumb you are, Engstrom! Quick, now, give me every word he said. Buccaneer Sam Baracol is nobody to play with. If he says he's got tin, he's got tin, and don't you ever forget it! What did he say?"

Miserably, Engstrom repeated the conversation he had heard in the hotel bar, miserably listened to Balke's opinion of him, and miserably offered a suggestion.

"Maybe we should start following the Mr. Hardlans again? Maybe the tin mine is really in Asia, or on Mars?"

"No, you idiot! The Hardlans are out of the picture now, they don't matter. Forget them. It's Sam Baracol we'd better keep tabs on. And here I'd been thinking we might be forced to lift the price control to stimulate more mining ventures. What I want you to do is this: you hunt up Sam Baracol, inform him that Commodity Bureau claims the right to buy every ounce he produces, at the present price, and make him sign a contract to that effect. Then keep an eye on him. He may try to weasel out of the deal, but he's going to keep that contract."

Engstrom stood up. "Now *that's* the sort of orders I understand, Mr. Blake. Don't you worry, I'll carry them out to the

letter. He won't get away with any funny business with me, I promise you."

"If only I could choose my own assistants" said Blake, sighing. "Well, that's all. But look out for the man, Engstrom. Sam Baracol is a slippery customer."

Sam was having the time of his life. He jetted up to Maine to pick up the sun dials, he jetted down to Arkansas to get his clay pigeons, and then he completed his load at the bone pit in Wyoming. There was a momentary delay in blasting starwards when Engstrom caught up with him at the spaceport in New Mexico, flourishing an iron-clad contract.

Sam objected, he argued and protested, but in the end he gave in.

"I guess you've got me, Mr. Engstrom," he said. "But can't we leave the price to be decided later, on delivery? After all, there's always the chance that when Commodity Bureau sees the superior quality of my product, they may decide to pay me at a higher rate."

"Not a chance," said Engstrom. "Why should they?"

"But after all, I went to all the trouble to locate this mine, and the problem of getting out the ore and purifying it will also be mine. And if I'm forbidden to sell on the open market, it seems to me

I ought at least to be well paid for my trouble. Don't you agree?"

"That may be, but there ain't only one price, and you know it."

"Yes, right now there is only one price. But it'll be some months yet before I shall have my first consignment ready for delivery. Who knows, in this uncertain world, what may not happen? The price may rise. The ceiling may be lifted. United World's needs are changeable, and time decays and ages move, *mutatis mutandis*. Don't you agree?"

"That's neither here nor there," said Engstrom confusedly. "All I know is, you've got to sign this contract."

Sam signed.

"I guess I know my job all right," said Engstrom, folding the contract and putting it in his pocket. "Now when and where will you make delivery?"

"I'd rather not be pinned down on that exactly, you know. It'll take some months, and after such intensive work I like to relax on my way home. And when I get to Canal City, I never know how long I'll stay. Suppose I let you know later?"

A grim smile stretched Engstrom's mouth as he patted his pocket and looked at Sam for a long, deliberate minute.

"Suppose you do," he said.

As always, Sam enjoyed the lift, the zoom, as the ship escaped



from the earth, and he did not mind the merging into hyperspace.

It seemed no time at all before he had delivered his triple cargo to the Mayor on Aeropagis III, accepted his grateful speeches, and departed for the other side of the mountains. No time at all before his ship was loaded and he was spaceborne again, heading for Mars. He stowed his cargo in a warehouse on the outskirts of Canal City, then settled down to a lazy life in an excellent hotel. Fabian Hardlan, he learned, was off exploring the region of the south polar cap, but would be back in a few weeks.

Sam relaxed. He studied the market reports from Earth, and

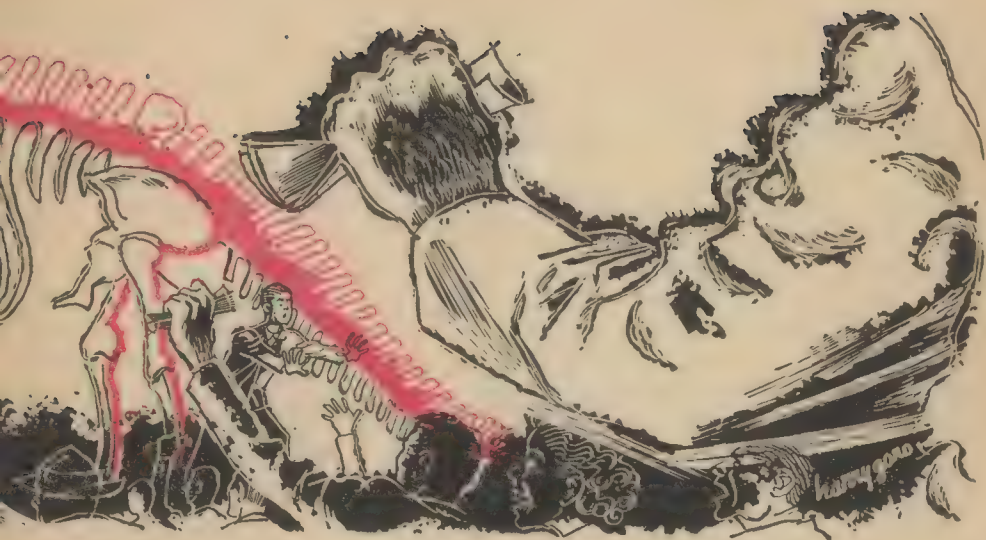
each day checked up on the pronouncements of Stabilization Office of Commodity Bureau. The price of tin, he noted, was exactly what it had been when he left Earth, so low that even the owner of a thousand slaves could not mine it at a profit.

He had been relaxing in Canal City for nearly a month when, one evening at the hotel bar, he felt a heavy hand smack him on the back.

"Hello there, Mr. Baracol," said a trembling voice. "I bet you didn't expect to see *me* here."

Sam turned around. "Engstrom! What are you doing here? And how you're shivering! You need a drink, man!"

Engstrom was wrapped as tight



as a cocoon in a brown fur cape with bulging pockets, and a brown muffler which covered his face to just below his eyes. His voice shook. "Why didn't anybody ever tell me how cold it gets on Mars? I've *never* been as cold as this in my life. Can't stand cold, anyhow!"

"Have a drink," said Sam.

"I guess I need it, even if it is warm in here."

When the hot whiskey had stopped his chill, he threw back his cape and grinned cagily.

"Surprised to see me?"

"Indeed I am! But I had been thinking about you. I was just deciding that it's about time I notified you I was ready to deliver my first consignment.

What airport would be most convenient for you?"

"No need to worry about that now, Mr. Baracol. You can turn the stuff over to me right here in Canal City."

"Here? Now?"

"That's right. Here and now. They warned me to watch out for you, and that's what I'm doing. And in case you had any idea of fooling me and smuggling a few cases onto Earth quietly, you can forget about it. I think I've nipped that little scheme of yours right in the bud."

"You do me an injustice," Sam said, shaking his head injuredly. "Indeed you do."

"That's neither here nor there. But I guess I feel warmed up

enough by this time. Let's go."

"Go where?"

"To inspect the goods, of course!" He shivered again. "I want to get it over with and catch the first ship back to Earth. How anybody ever stands this miserable climate is beyond me."

"But surely," Sam objected, "there's no reason for hurry. After all, it's a perfectly straightforward —"

"Hah!" Engstrom snorted. "Perfectly straightforward flimflam, if I know you! Don't try any tricks with me, Mr. Baracol. I've got that contract you signed right here in my pocket, and you know what'll happen to you if you try to get out of it."

"My dear Mr. Engstrom! I assure you, I am quite ready. I was only concerned for your health."

The warehouse was a drab barracks of a building, one of fifty clustered together on the bare red sands of Mars. The two men entered a drafty corridor and walked past locked bins and compartments. They stopped at a door marked "Baracol."

Sam unlocked the door. They entered a small room, unfurnished except for a ramshackle desk with a crowbar lying on it and a glowing electric heater. A sealed crate sat on the floor near the heater.

"Well, there you are, Mr. Eng-

strom," Sam said pleasantly, pointing at the crate. He opened a desk drawer and got out some sheets of paper. "I'll just get the receipt ready for you to sign."

"Aren't you going to open the crate?"

Sam looked startled. "Is that necessary? Surely you've seen tin before."

"Open the crate!"

Sam shrugged delicately. "Oh, very well," he said. "If you insist."

Picking up the crowbar, he snapped the metal bands that bound the crate. Inside were neatly stacked blocks of gleaming tin.

"Pretty stuff, isn't it?" said Sam. "I always admire the glow of metal."

Engstrom scowled and scratched one of the bars with a fingernail. "That's funny," he said dubiously. "Looks all right to me."

"Funny?" repeated Sam. "I hardly understand. In any case, as long as you're satisfied, here's the receipt. Just sign here, please."

"Hey, wait a minute!" Engstrom pointed at the scrawled paper. "This says a hundred cases. There ain't but one case here. Before I sign anything, where's the other ninety-nine?"

"Why, obviously I didn't have room for a hundred cases in this little room. They're in a larger storeroom, down the hall. Frankly,

Mr. Engstrom, I'm amazed at your attitude. Is there any reason why they shouldn't all be just like this one?"

"That," Engstrom said grimly, "I don't know, Mr. Baracol. All I know is they told me to watch out for tricks from you. I'm not going to sign my name that you delivered a hundred cases of tin, when all I see is one. I'm not so dumb as all that."

"But surely you don't want to take the time to inspect ninety-nine more crates, each one exactly like all the others? Besides, the storeroom isn't heated, you know."

"I don't care. Time I got plenty of. Let's see those crates." Sam shrugged his shoulders. Wordlessly he led the way back into the hall, to a corridor which led to an icy cavern of a room where sat ninety-nine more cases.

Rubbing his hands briskly for warmth, he said: "There they are. Been sitting there more than a month. Satisfied?"

"Start opening them!" commanded Engstrom. He sneezed.

Sam hesitated. His shoulders drooped. "The cold —" he began, his eyes fixed to the floor.

"Open them!"

Slowly Sam took up the crowbar, slowly he ripped the metal bands and laid bare the contents of the first case.

In it, stacked to the top, was an

amorphous, unhealthy looking pile of gray blocks. Engstrom bent over and clutched one in his hand. It crumbled to powder. He touched another. It crumbled.

He snatched the bar from Sam's slack hand and pried open a second case, a third, a fourth. Each one contained the same: a brittle gray metal which crumbled in his grasp. He turned on Sam.

"What is this stuff?" he demanded.

"Tin," Sam said hesitantly.

"Oh, sure," Engstrom said sarcastically. "Of course it's tin. Any fool can tell that just by looking at it. What are you trying to pull here, Mr. Baracol?"

Sam spread his hands. This was the crucial point of his whole plan. He hardly dared breathe as he said mournfully, "It's *supposed* to be tin, Mr. Engstrom. Naturally, I didn't do the refining with my own hands. But I am sure that no one intended any subterfuge or anything like that. I suppose it's just barely possible that there has been some mistake. . . ."

"Mistake!" Engstrom sneered — and quickly converted it into a sneeze. "Curse this cold!" he said savagely. "Anyway, Mr. Baracol, we'll see what's going to be done about this. This — this junk you're trying to pass off as tin is the last sharp trick you're going to pull. I refuse to accept it."

"Refuse to accept it?" Sam's

tone was indignant, but his heart leaped with joy.

"Yes! And what's more, I'm going to see just what the home office thinks of this, Mr. Baracol. Where's your phone?"

"My what?" Sam squawked, his heart sinking into his boots.

"Your phone. Oh, don't worry, I'll reverse the charges. I believe I saw a phone in your office. Don't bother to show me the way; I can find it."

He started back along the corridor, and Sam scampered after him. "One moment, Mr. Engstrom," he wheedled. "Look, there's no need to put your department to the expense of an interplanetary phone call. If you don't want to accept the tin, by all means don't do it — I won't mind. But —"

"No, sir," said Engstrom triumphantly. "We've got you dead to rights this time. I'll get you for conspiracy to defraud — malicious mischief — oh, wait till I get to that phone!"

"Excuse me," Sam said desperately, and darted ahead of the Commodities man. He raced through the door of his office, scrabbled at the base of his desk for the phone wires. It wasn't the loss of money that bothered him — though he had a small fortune tied up in this deal — but for Buccaneer Baracol to lose out to a nincompoop like Engstrom — and just on a wild chance like

this — was more than merely humiliating. Sam knew perfectly well what would happen when Engstrom called the Home Office. It was not what Engstrom would expect — but it was catastrophic for Sam.

He found the phone wires at last and gave them a healthy jerk. They came free and he sat erect, searching his imagination for something to tell Engstrom when he appeared in the doorway.

But seconds passed, and Engstrom didn't appear.

"Good lord!" Sam exclaimed. Faster than he had come in, he dodged around the desk and hurried back along the corridor.

Engstrom's patient figure was sitting in a straight-backed chair outside the storage room, sniffing and looking as self-satisfied as a man with a running nose can look.

"My phone's out of order," Sam began tentatively.

Engstrom nodded. "I was afraid it might be," he said icily. "Fortunately, I found this extension here. Just be patient, Mr. Baracol. They're putting the call to Earth through now.

It took a quarter of an hour for connection to be made, and then the long delays in question-and-answer prolonged the conversation half an hour more. Sam took some slight pleasure in watching Engstrom congeal in the frigid air of the storerooms. But that

was about all he had to take pleasure in!

The whole plan was collapsing in ruins around his head. And when Engstrom stepped out of the booth, Sam saw that his worst fears were realized.

Through chattering teeth, Engstrom said: "S-s-strange thing, Mr. B-Baracol. They s-s-s-say that stuff is really t-t-tin, after all!"

"Of course," Sam said hollowly. And indeed it was. Allotropic, cold-weather tin; pure tin, which by melting and recasting would get back all of its luster and silvery gleam, but made into a dull powdery substance by the cold, cold air of Mars. Well, he told himself, it had been a flimsy trick anyhow; it served him right that it had failed.

"They s-said," Engstrom went on, "that you were j-j-just trying to evade the p-price controls — h-h-h-hoping I would turn it down so you could import it to Earth without restriction, and sell it in the b-b-b-black market for whatever p-price you could g-g-g-get. T-tough luck that we found you out, Mr. B-Baracol! Now get out your receipt, and I'll s-s-s-sign it!"

Sam, leaden-hearted, found the scrap of paper and held it out to Engstrom's shivering hand. The government man was in acute distress, he saw, eyes watering, red face mottled by the white

weals of hives, teeth chattering.

Sam narrowed his eyes. There was something familiar about this — something that he could just barely recall on the fringes of his memory.

He said smoothly: "Here's your receipt, Mr. Engstrom. Maybe we'd better go back to my hotel for you to sign it. It's hard to get a pen to write in this cold. And besides, back in my hotel I have the antidote for you —"

He let his voice trail off, in the manner of a man who realizes he has said too much.

Engstrom's head snapped up. "Antidote?" he gasped. He stared around the room, caught a glimpse of his own reflection in the glass of the phone booth door. Mottled face, streaming eyes, nostrils contorted as they fought for breath. "I'm poisoned!" he yelled. "Baracol, you're poisoning me!"

"No, no," Sam said hastily. "It's merely a simple allergy, Mr. Engstrom. Please come back, and let's get this thing signed. . . ."

"What is it?" Engstrom demanded. "What's p-p-poisoning me? Is it this s-stuff?" His sweeping gesture included the whole room of allotropic tin.

"Well, yes," Sam admitted. "Please, Mr. Engstrom, you'll feel better when we get back to the hotel. I'll give you the antidote right away. It's not serious — unless, of course, you let it go. Some people are allergic to

it. Some are not — I'm not; for instance."

Engstrom was a pitiable sight, but red sparks of rage danced in his eyes. "C-come on," he demanded. "We're going back to your hotel all right. I want that antidote. And I'm r-r-refusing this shipment, in writing. If it isn't p-poisonous, we'll prosecute you for fraud. And if it is, if you g-g-g-go ahead and import a poisonous substance to earth, the Sanitation Bureau will get after you. And then, h-h-h-heaven h-help you, Mr. Baracol!"

"All right," Sam said despondently. And carefully did not meet Engstrom's eyes until the refusal was safely signed.

Late that night, after Engstrom had radioed his report to Earth — ethergrams cost only a fraction of an interplanetary phone call's fantastic price — Sam sat with him in the snug barroom of the hotel. Engstrom was more comfortable now, and his face looked nearly normal as he sipped his hot brandy.

"Those pills you gave me helped a lot," he said grudgingly. "If it hadn't been for them I'd have you in the jug now for attempted manslaughter. What kind of pills were they?"

"Ssh," said Sam, and leaned closer to the telecaster, with its late news from Earth. When he heard the confirmation of what

he had expected — all price controls had been removed from tin, in order to encourage mining operations and research for substitutes — Sam could not refrain from patting the pocket where Engstrom's signed refusal rested, with a contented smile.

"Don't look so damn cheerful," Engstrom said sarcastically. "Don't forget I've got you coming and going. If that tin is poisonous, you can't import it. If it isn't, you've committed fraud."

Sam smiled beatifically. "Look," he said, pointing. "Fabian's back from his trip." Hardlan was smiling at them from the door.

"How's the polar cap?" Sam asked the newcomer.

"Cold. How's your tin?"

"Oh," said Sam, "it's cold too."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that it's still in the warehouse here at Canal City. Mr. Engstrom here has refused to accept it for the Commodities office, and so I am now at liberty to sell it in the open market at any price I can get. I may say that I expect to add substantially to a somewhat depleted bank account."

Engstrom's jaw dropped. "Are you crazy? You can't sell that stuff! It's poisonous — you said so yourself."

"Did I?" asked Sam.

"You sure did. Look what it did to me, back in the warehouse.

I would have died if you hadn't given me those pills. You said so!"

Sam was shaking his head. "Wrong on three counts, Mr. Engstrom," he said gently. "The tin isn't poisonous — I didn't say it was — and those pills weren't the antidote. Think back to my exact words. Did I say the *tin* was poisonous?"

"Well, I *asked* —"

"You asked me if 'this stuff' did it. I assumed you meant the cold, Mr. Engstrom," said Sam virtuously, "and I told you very truthfully that it did. I sincerely hope you did not mistake my meaning. There are a few unfortunate individuals who are allergic to cold, just as others of us are allergic to goldenrod pollen or chicken feathers. You are one of them, a fact which I should have recognized some time ago."

Engstrom choked. "But the antidote," he babbled. "Those pills —"

Sam grinned. "The pills were plain, everyday antihistamines, Mr. Engstrom. They weren't the antidote, though it is true they helped you. They are standard treatment for any case of allergy. I keep them myself in case I should accidentally run across a cat."

Engstrom leaped to his feet. "Curse you," he said in a stran-

gled tone. "Then you did trick me, after all?"

"That's strong language," Sam objected. "I told you nothing but the truth at any time."

Clutching at a straw, Engstrom said: "The antidote — you said you had a special antidote in your hotel room."

Sam smiled fondly at the Commodities man. "And so I did, Mr. Engstrom. The only suitable antidote for relief of cold allergy on a permanent basis. You will find it in any heated room, Mr. Engstrom. We call it warmth."

When Engstrom, wordlessly enraged, had left the room, Fabian Hardlan chuckled. "Sam, you're an old buccaneer, just as they say."

"I never deceive anyone," Sam said blandly. "It's so much easier to let people deceive themselves — though I must admit I had a few difficult moments with Engstrom over this tin. You know, Fabian, what a straightforward fellow I am. And yet, for some mysterious reason, I often inspire suspicion even when I least deserve it. Poor Engstrom! It's a pity he has such an untrusting nature."

"I never liked his face," said Fabian absently. "By the way, Sam, when are you going to tell me the *real* story of what you did with my dinosaur bones?"

Sam smiled dreamily.

SO WISE, SO YOUNG

By **GRAHAM DOAR**

"You're right, mister, it's a great day! Those 'star-riders' finally landed on the moon! First three tries ended in State funerals, but that shiny new Moonmission IV hit the target on the nose. Which makes it a big day for me personally, because in a way I was on that ship.

"How do I mean? Well, that's a long story, but I don't mind telling it, now. Pull up a chair and order yourself a couple of drinks.

"I guess the place to start would be exactly six months ago. That was the day Jerry was coming home from school. . . ."

THIS was the day Jerry was coming home from school and I was feeling fine. I was on top of the world that day. Not just looking forward to seeing the kid brother again after five years, though that was a part of it all right, but everything was—I don't know—right.

I was up in the tower monitoring the blast-off of flight 807, the Yokohama passenger rocket, last

one for the day. Just past *brennschluss* she began to oscillate a hair, but at zenith I had her on the pip and she went into the long glide as sweet and true as young love. At zenith plus ten minutes exactly, the light above my screen began to wink. This meant that Honolulu had picked her up and she was out of my hands. I cut my screen and lit a cigarette.



Pete Kreuger, my talker, was grinning as he clicked out his panel and settled back. "Honolulu says you're not up to par, Ben. They read her a foot and a half low and a foot south off course." He stuck out a hand and twiddled his fingers and I tossed him the pack of cigarettes.

"How do you like it, boy?" I winked at him. "They don't call me Bull's-eye Ben Bascomb for nothing."

"Is it bull's *eye*, they call you? Guess I heard it wrong." Pete's buzzer sounded and he ducked my back-handed swing and flipped his switch. The Terminal operator's voice squawked in the speaker, "For Ben, Pete. Outside call. Is he clear?"

"Jerry!" I dived for the handset on my desk as Pete threw out the speaker and plugged me in. "Hi, sweetheart. Put him through."

"Hello, Ben?" It was Jerry. His voice was a little deeper, harder, but it was still the kid brother's voice and I'd have known it anywhere.

I cleared my throat. "Hiya, boy."

"Ben!"

"What's new, kid?"

"Aw, Ben. Gee, it's great to hear your voice."

"Yeah. Here, too. How's it been, kid?"

"Clear jets and full tanks, Ben. Cut out that 'kid' stuff. I can lick you, now."

"That'll be the day."

"How's Mom?"

"Tickled pink and nervous as a bride. Been baking goodies ever since she got word that baby was coming home."

"Cut it out or I *will* lick you."

"Haven't you seen her yet? Where are you now?"

"I — I just got in, Ben. I'm downtown. Thought I might come out to the port and pick you up. If you can leave now?"

"Why sure, kid. Any time. I'm all through as soon as I turn in my log."

"Be about twenty minutes. I — I kind of wanted to see you first, Ben."

"What's —? Well, sure, kid. Tech's Room in the main terminal building. You might as well get a look at it now. You'll be spending a lot of your time there."

"Ben, I . . . Yeah. Yeah, Ben. Twenty minutes, huh?"

"Right, Jerry."

Well, there was nothing wrong with his wanting to see me first. Jerry had never really known a father. He'd been only three years old when Dad was killed. He'd always sort of, well, depended on me. I kind of liked it. There was nothing strange about his wanting to see me first.

Nothing strange at all.

I felt fine. I was on top of the world and blasting for altitude.

And when I saw him I wanted

to slug him — to smash him down.

Standing hesitantly in the door of the technical employees' lounge, looking about, he was bigger, darker, a little harder around the eyes and mouth, but still Jerry, still the kid brother. And I felt like beating his stubborn head off.

It was the uniform, trim, space-blue, with the silver comet pinned high on the left breast. Little brother was an Air Force rocket pilot. One of the glamor boys of the military. The "star-riders" they were called, and don't think they didn't love it.

He saw me as I carefully folded and put down the paper I'd been reading and got slowly to my feet. His face set and the gleaming insignia on his snug tunic lifted as he took a deep breath. I threw him a fancy highball and said, "Sorry, Lieutenant. This is the working men's room. The brass hangs out in the other wing."

Color flooded his tanned face, giving it a purple hue. "Ben! Ben, I —"

"I ought to slug you. So help me, I ought to let you have it right here."

"Ben. Listen."

"I've got a good mind to do it. How would your fancypants outfit like it — their brand-new lieutenant getting into a brawl with a mere technician? So help me, I ought to do it."

He put a hand on my shoulder and I slapped it down. "Ben," he

said. "Stop it! Cut it out, Ben!"

"I ought to rip that tin badge off you and make you eat it. If you don't have any consideration for your neck, you might have given a thought to Mom's feelings. By God, I'd like to slug you!"

"Take it easy, Ben."

"Sure. Sure, I'll take it easy. What have I got to get upset about?" The back of my neck felt hot and I knew I was talking too loud and I didn't give a damn. "Work and pinch and beat your brains out to put your kid brother through school. Get down on your knees and crawl to the boss to get him a start with the best line in the world. Brag to all your friends about how he stands at the top of his class. Then when he throws the whole thing over for a fancy-dress uniform, just take it easy. I ought to slug you."

"Ben, I —"

"Go to hell." I went through the door and out across the concourse of the big Terminal, Jerry's mirror-polished boots pounding at my side. "Ben," he said. "Look, Ben, let's go some place where we can talk."

"I've got nothing to talk to you about, glamor boy. Save it for Mom."

"I had to do it, Ben. I had to."

"Nuts to you, hero. Save it."

"Ben." He put his hand on my arm and I stopped and turned to face him. He looked miserable. "Do you think — will Mom take

it too hard? — Will she, Ben?"

I just looked at him.

Maybe he didn't remember, but I did.

Moonmission I, a rickety old bucket that today, wouldn't be passed for transcontinental service, and those starry-eyed fools planned to shoot her to the moon. The *moon*, mind you. And Dad, my Dad, with the starriest eyes of them all, he couldn't miss the chance to ride her. I remembered all right.

I was in the big bedroom upstairs, watching out the window and holding back the tears of frustration. Jerry was just a baby but I was twelve and I wanted to see the blast-off of the first rocket to the moon. Major Bascomb was the pilot and he was my Dad and I had a right to be there. Mom was in the room with me and her face was sort of set and white, her eyes very big. She was scared, I guess, but I wasn't scared. I was proud and angry.

Anyway, from where I was at the window, I knew I could see the fire-trail when the rocketship took off.

And I saw it. A pale streak of blue-white light that was just *there* suddenly, hanging, a fiery finger pointing the way to the stars, beginning to fade already, and then — then — way up, almost out of sight, the sudden burst of a different light, blinding

and white and ferocious and heart-stopping, that winked and went out. And that was the end of *Moonmission I*.

I knew what it was, for sure, but Mom wasn't looking and I couldn't say anything. But then the noise came and she saw my face and she began to scream and went on for a long time screaming until I thought she'd never stop. She did though, after a while, but from then on things were different. It never was the same again.

I slapped his hand away from my arm and said, "How the hell do you think she'd take it?"

The gyrocab taxied around the curve of the cloverleaf, clicked through the switch onto the monorail and began to pick up speed. The tail wheels came up and the voice of the jets went from a basso bellow to a soprano scream. The driver spoke over his shoulder, his gruff tones cutting with ease through the thin note of the turbo-jets. "Have you been in long, Lieutenant?"

"Not long," said Jerry. I snorted and lit a cigarette.

"Rockets, huh?"

"Yeah."

"How d'you like it?"

"It's o.k."

I said, "Look, fellow, would you like me to get up there and monitor the cab? Then you could climb back here and have a real nice chat."

The driver turned his head and gave me a cold stare. "Keep your shirt on, bud. You're getting there, aren't you?"

Jerry said, "All right, driver." He put a hand on my knee.

I said, "How would you like a split lip for a tip?" How would I like to shut my mouth? What the hell, you can't fight them all.

The back of the driver's neck was red. "Any time, bud. Any time," he growled.

Jerry said again, "All right, driver."

"O.k., Loot. O.k."

I said, "If you boys would like to be alone together, you can drop me somewhere." I could see the driver's big hands tighten on the

controls and Jerry said disgustedly, "Cut it out, Ben."

"You can't tell about these cab-drivers. Some of them really go for a uniform."

The cab's speed checked suddenly and I grinned, leaning forward, getting my feet under me. Jerry's grip bit painfully into my knee and he shoved against me, pushing me off balance. "Ben! Stop it! Go ahead, driver. This is a private fight."

"Right, Lieutenant. But if you want to keep it that way, make him lay off." The cab picked up speed again and already we were sweeping down the long approach to the city. I said, "Take your hands off me, hero."



"Listen, Ben, I —"

"What did you do with the money I sent you this last year? Spend it on fancy uniforms?"

He flushed and sat back in the seat. "All right, Ben. It's all in the bank. I'll give you a check. You — you just won't understand, will you? You just don't know."

"The hell I don't know!" I wanted to smash something. I wanted to spit in his eye. "I've seen hundreds of you, glamor boy. I work at the rocketport, remember? Day after day, every blast-off, gangs of kids hanging around the edge of the field with their mouths wide open. Stars in their eyes and rocks in their heads. They can tell you the mass ratio, velocity at *brennschluss* and the name of the pilot on every rocket that takes off — and most of them can't pass arithmetic. Save it, Jerry. I've heard it all."

"All right, Ben. All right."

"Gloryhounds. Every time some wild-eyed peanut-brain writes a new story about spaceships, the Air Force sweeps the kids in like netting fish. 'Adventure! Thrills! Ride the stars with the Star-Riders!' Pfui!"

"All right, Ben."

The hell it was all right.

There was the click of the switch under us, the jets cut out and the tail wheels came down. In a silent, smooth glide, the gyrocab rolled to a stop before the hundred-story shack we called home.

The driver said, "Hey, Lieutenant, how about this *Moonmission IV*? You going along?"

Jerry snapped, "How about your minding your own business?" His face was a blank, but color seeped up from the collar of his tunic.

"Jeez, you guys are hard to get along with." The jet thundered and the cab whirled away.

Moonmission IV! I hadn't even given that a thought!

I said, "You poor, wild-eyed, half-witted fish!"

She'd heard the whir of the lift, heard our steps in the corridor and she was standing in the center of the big living room, facing the door. The expression on her face was a thing to see. Mom was only fifty and still a lovely woman. Sure, there were touches of gray through the gold of her hair and some, a little, of the delicate color had faded from her face, but her eyes were bigger and brighter even than I remembered them as a boy and her mouth still smiled easily and often. At this moment she was radiant and her beauty ageless.

I would have cut off my right arm to have saved her this.

"Jerry!" she breathed. "Oh, Jerry!"

He reached her then, lifting her from the floor in a tight embrace, and they were both laughing and crying as he kissed her. I went over and looked out the window.

"Jerry! You — you've grown up!" She was breathless, but her voice sounded all right. "Stand away now. Let me look at you."

I clenched my hands in my pockets.

"Five years. It's been a long time, Jerry. My, you do look like your father. Even the way he — used — to — dress." All right. Now she'd got it. "Oh, no, Jerry!"

I barely heard his voice. "Yes, Mom."

"Ben!" I turned from the window. "Don't let him, Ben!" She had put her hands out toward me and I couldn't move.

"It's done, Mom." Jerry almost whispered. "Don't take it this way, Mom. Don't."

"Ben, you have to get him out of it. I don't care how, you have to get him out of it." All the radiance was gone from her face and, now, her age was evident. And she didn't know the half of it, not yet. "Why didn't you tell me, Ben? I could have stopped him."

Sick, frustrate rage flooded me. "What am I, his nurse? He wants to be a hero, who's stopping him? Why should I give a damn?"

"Ben!"

"Ben didn't know, Mom." Jerry held her, turned her to hold her against his breast, the gleaming silver comet seeming caught in the fine graying gold of her hair. "Oh, Mom, don't take it like that. I — I had to do it. It's what I've al-

ways wanted, Mom. Always."

"Why didn't you tell us?" Her voice was muffled.

"I wish I'd had the nerve. I wish I had."

"Oh, Jerry." She freed her hands and clasped them on his shoulders, looking up at him. "All our plans for you. All Ben's work and sacrifice, the money he's spent on your training, was that all for nothing?"

I turned back to the window, speaking over my shoulder. "Don't give it a thought, Mom. He never did."

Jerry said, "That's not fair, Ben. I've been grateful, I *am* grateful for all you've done. I — I feel awful about — about this. But can't you — both of you — can't you see that a man has to —"

I cut in, hard. "Look, glamor boy. If this is the one about a man has to live his own life, I'm going out and get a drink. I've heard this one."

Mom said, "Ben!" To my back.

"And he knows what he can do with his gratitude!"

I hated him. Right then I hated him.

In the servo-room I pushed the buzzer and spoke into the tube, "Whiskey and soda. One — double." The chime overhead dinged once, signifying that the robot bartender had gone into action.

Giving me this guff about a man has to live his own life. Oh, sure.

And what about her life? What would she have left after the Air Force's newest sky-fish whooshed off to Kingdom Come taking Jerry with it? *Moonmission IV!* When would they be satisfied? Never, probably. Three times they've tried already, three of those shining metal sharks they'd hurled into the bottomless sea of deep space. Three crews, that made, they'd killed. Husbands and fathers — and brothers — blasted to nothingness. For what? So that man could set his foot on the airless, cracked and barren surface of the moon? So that some brass-plated, beribboned pouter pigeon could lean back from his desk, light a fresh cigar and say, "Well, this time we've done it, boys?" Nuts!

The chime dinged twice and I lifted the serving door and took my drink. It tasted fine.

And if it didn't kill her when she found out that the stubborn fool was going along on this next suicide leap, it sure as hell would when the pay-off came. But did he care about that? Oh, no. Why should he give a thought to Mom or to me? A man has to live his own life!

For how long?

I pushed the buzzer again. When the fresh one came, I took it back into the living room.

Over dinner, Jerry talked a lot and Mom listened, bright-eyed

and interested. I could see that she was getting used to the idea. I pretended to eat and kept my mouth shut except to stick a fork in. Sooner or later she'd have to know the rest of it, but be damned if she'd get it from me. Once Mom laughed. Maybe she was forcing it a little, but she laughed. I felt sick.

I left the table and went into the servo-room and came back with another drink.

"Ben," Mom said, "aren't you going to finish your dinner?"

"No." I said.

Nobody said anything for a minute, then Jerry went on with his talk. I sipped my drink.

After a while Mom wheeled the table into the servo-room and came back with the coffee. I should have had some but I didn't.

Jerry lit a cigarette and sipped his coffee, sitting low in his big chair, his head thrown back and his lean legs stretched out. His ankle-high boots gleamed in the light. He said with a luxurious sigh, "Guess in the excitement I never did get around to mentioning that it's swell to be home."

I said, "It's nice to have you, glamor boy. Even for such a short time."

"Aw, lay off it, Ben. That's not funny any more."

"It never was funny."

"Ben!" Mom's voice was pleading. "Be nice. Your brother has only a week's leave. Let's try to

make it a really pleasant one."

"Oh, sure. Anything I can do, hero? I'm yours to command."

Jerry put down his coffee cup and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. "Ben, what's eating you? Oh, I know you're disappointed that I'm not coming to work with you at the port. But rockets aren't so bad, honest. These new ships — well, you should see them."

"Yes, Ben. Jerry was telling me —"

Three double whiskies and almost no food and then they ganged up on me like that! Rage and hurt and bitter disappointment boiled up in me and I got to my feet, feeling myself begin to tremble. "So Jerry was telling you? I'll bet! Telling you all about the new ships and how they're fitted with so many safety devices there's barely room for the crew. A ten-year-old child can fly them and they land on an egg without cracking the shell. How statistics show that more people are killed in gyrocopters than in rockets. Well, doesn't it sound familiar to you? Don't you remember hearing it all years ago? And where is *he* now?"

"Take it easy, Ben." Jerry was standing too.

"Ben, don't —"

"Just like his father!" I wasn't drunk, but I sure had lost control of my tongue. "My God, those snake-charmers in the Air Force

could stuff a tin whistle full of carbide and get some damned fool to volunteer to ride it to the moon. Side saddle! For fifty years now they've been killing them off, crew after crew, and still they come in droves."

"Stop it, Ben!"

Mom said, "Jerry, what's he talking about?"

"Nothing, Mom. He's tight."

That did it. "Drunk or sober, hero, you listen to me. You're not going to do it. Do you hear? You're not going to do it! *Moon-mission four* — and five and six and all the rest of them can get along without you. I'll stop you from killing yourself if —"

"Jerry!" Mom's cry was a low wail.

The kid was angry now, as angry as I was. He seized my shoulders and shook, hard. "Shut up, Ben!"

"Take your hands off me, hero!"

"Well, damn you, stop it!"

And I hit him. Not with my fist, but hard, a backhanded swipe full across the mouth. His hands dropped, curled into fists and he stood rigid. For a moment I thought he was going to swing.

And I wished he would. Oh, how I wished he would!

Then his tongue touched gingerly the split in his lip and he said quietly, "O.k., Ben. O.k."

Mom was crying, silently, as I left the room, walking fast.

(Continued on page 161)



THE MAN FROM SATURN

By HARRIET FRANK, JR.

You might as well know it right off: it won't do any good for you to fall in love with Betsy Simms. She's crazy about a guy named Yrtxxe (alias Sam), whose skin is green and whose address is Saturn. Betsy dug him out of a test tube one night and hasn't been quite the same since. . . .

Sam wasn't easy for a girl to handle. For one thing, his idea of flaming love was to take a walk in the park and think at you. That might be hot stuff up among the Rings, but Betsy wanted real action!

And then a sleek slice of female named Leda came along and loaded Sam up with ticker-tape parades, keys to the city, and a Presidential reception — and Betsy had more action than she knew what to do with!

RUTHIE said she knew something like this would happen to me. She says there's something dark and Celtic in my ancestry, even though she knows that my family is Pennsylvania Dutch. Ruthie's a fine one to talk. She has her fortune told down on Third Avenue once a week as regular as clock-work, and she won't go to work if our landlady's black cat crosses her path. Now she says she felt it in her bones. She says there was a kind of sulphurous smell in our apartment, but I'm sure it was only the stuff I used to mop the bathroom with. I told her so.

"All right, Madame Curie," she said. "Explain it to me."

Ruthie thinks because I'm a lab technician for the Severn Research Foundation that I'm a cross between Robert Oppenheimer and Albert Einstein. But even if I were I couldn't come up with an answer, because nothing like this has ever happened outside of a Walpurgis Night, especially to a girl like me.

I'm the kind of a girl who gets her bills paid promptly

on the tenth of the month and sees her dentist twice a year. I bank a third of my salary, vote in the primaries, and cry at the movies. I love Valentines and children and early American furniture. Except for the mumps I've never been sick a day in my life, and the only psychosomatic symptom I've ever shown was when I broke out in a rash the day I got engaged to Arnold. He says it was an anxiety syndrome, but I think it was my red woolen dress. I didn't contradict him because he's a psychiatrist and he ought to know. I don't hate my parents secretly, I have no power drives, and the only time I take a drink is when Ruthie and I have Christmas open house. So far there *is* no explanation. Arnold is in no condition to apply the scientific method, and Ruthie just mopes around being Irish and spooky, so it's up to me — and I've gone over it and over it.

It started on Valentine's Day. There was some chocolate cake left over from the night before and I made myself some cocoa. It was a lovely, unwholesome breakfast. There's something about cocoa and snow and smoke from chimneys that makes me feel Charles Dickensy and romantic. I called up Arnold and recited "Roses are red, Violets are blue" at him, but he was sleepy and thought it was a maladjusted child he'd been treating. When he finally realized it was me he

wanted to know if anything was wrong.

"No," I said. "I'm just feeling festive."

"Fine." And then, with more of a lilt, he said, "That's fine."

There was a pause and then he coughed and cleared his throat. "Valentine's Day . . . There's a romantic significance, isn't there?"

"Usually," I said.

"You'll be hearing from me," he said mysteriously, and hung up. I *would* have liked him to murmur a few things at me, but it was seven in the morning and he probably hadn't even brushed his teeth. Besides, Arnold says the sensual graph is periodic and moves in a cyclic pattern, and that emotional relationships have to allow for the discrepancies of the parties involved. What he means is you're either in the mood or you're not. He wasn't.

I confess it took the wind out of my sails, until I went to catch my bus. There was snow on the ground and everything looked as though it were wrapped in white tissue paper. You felt that if you peeled it off you'd find a spring hat or a dollar bill or a ticket to Paris. When I got to Rockefeller Center I went into the florist's on the ground floor and bought one single daffodil in a little pot. It cost me a dollar sixty-five, and since I needed a new lipstick and mouth wash, you can just set it

down to late winter stirrings.

Everybody in the elevator looked at that daffodil wistfully. One man, a sort of stock-brokers type, leaned over and inhaled it. "Perky thing," he said, sighing. When I got off at my floor he said, "I wish you were going all the way to the top," and he wasn't being fresh. It just had that effect on people.

When I got to the lab I put it up on the window ledge. With the light coming through its petals it looked like home-churned butter. Even Mr. Randall, who never makes a joke because he's head of the laboratory, made a joke. "Daffodils are yellow, wish I were your fellow," he recited. "Prima-vera, eh, Betsy?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Well, I hope it won't take the starch out of you if I ask you to stay late tonight. The fragments of the Santa Querido Meteor arrived this morning. . . ."

It had been in the newspapers for three weeks; first, the reports from observatories all over the country, describing the spots and eruptions on the planet Saturn; and then the fall of that great meteor in the Arizona desert. The crater it had ploughed was almost five miles long, and it was filled with strange and glittering rock fragments. We felt pretty good about the fact that Severn Labs had been chosen to do the analysis on ore that might, just possibly

might, have fallen through space for a billion miles, all the way from the Rings of Saturn.

Randall's voice droned on. "Jensen is running some geological tests on them, but we'd like you to do the report. It has to go to Princeton in the morning. Those atomic fellows want our findings. Think you can handle it?"

"I'll try."

"Good. Jensen's got the material vatted in a salt solution. Just leave everything undisturbed. His notes will be ready by six. Get your boy friend to buy you dinner, and then be back here by eight if you can."

"Yes, Mr. Randall."

"And don't discuss it. We're all under a top secret regimen as long as we're being investigated. I want my crew to make a fine showing. It's Los Alamos for all of us if we come out with a clean record." He paused at the door. "You're not nervous here at night, are you?"

"Oh, no."

"Remember, don't disturb the material. Just do up the report."

Miss Tomkin, who works in blood culture, came in on his parting remark. She waited until he had turned into his own office. "Is he keeping you in tonight?" she asked, sotto voce.

"He is."

"I wouldn't stay in this lab after dark for all the mink in minkdom."

"Why not?" I asked, putting on my smock. "We don't manufacture monsters here."

"Did you see *The Thing*?" she said nervously.

"No."

"Well, I did. Last week at the Uptown. The Thing came right out of an ice-cube when this man wasn't looking."

"You don't say."

"Laugh if you want to."

"I do."

"All right! But that rock Randall was telling you about — it's bobbing around in the vat like crazy. Jensen had to seal the lid with paraffin."

"Maybe it's a Mexican Jumping Meteor," I said solemnly.

"Well, I think you ought to call up Arnold and have him stay with you."

"Suzy," I said sternly, "for a scientifically trained person you're acting like something out of a weird story magazine. I think this investigation has got you jumpy."

"Jumpy!" she snapped. "Last week the investigators went to talk to my dentist because I was taking night appointments. They know all about my upper plate. They know what I eat for breakfast."

"What's so terrible about that?"

"They know who I eat it *with*!"

"That's funny. Nobody's been asking any questions about me."

"What's there to ask?" said

Suzy. "You've been going with the same fellow for two years."

"They'll probably get to me," I said. "Now run along and let me get some work done."

Arnold called around five to say he couldn't have dinner with me, but that I could expect a little surprise. "Something sentimental," he said. "I'm awfully sorry about tonight, but Leda has asked me to sit in on an examination. She's blocked away from the root of her patient's neurosis, and wants a fresh mind."

"Oh," I said. Leda is not my favorite dish. She's Arnold's associate, and if ever I saw a woman with a mind like a steel trap, she's the woman. She's as cold as beer on a hot day and twice as heady.

"Do good," I said cheerfully to Arnold, and rang off. All my Valentine feelings ebbed away. It was just another cold day in February. I'd work late, eat a sandwich in the drugstore, buy some magazines, and so to bed.

The elevator boy brought in a box from the florist's just as the last person left the office. Arnold's roses with Arnold's idea of love rampant. The card read: "Body and Soul . . . A".

I stuck one of them in the lapel of my coat and went downstairs to the drugstore. Mickey, the counter boy, saw me come in, glanced mysteriously around him, produced an egg from under the

counter and cracked it into the malt mixer. "Valentine," he said. "No extra charge."

"I'll pay," I said sadly, "in calories."

"Where's the doc? Working late?"

I nodded disconsolately.

"Tough. You in late, too?"

"I'm afraid so."

He bent his head close to mine and spoke from the corner of his mouth. "I got news for you," he muttered. "You're being tailed."

His eyes flicked off a sallow-faced man at the end of the counter who was rhythmically munching crackers.

"That's just a man eating crackers," I said.

"You come in here every day, don't you — maybe twice?"

"Sure."

"He's been in every day — twice when you are. Coincidence? Not on your life." He looked at me, troubled. "You're a dish. Maybe this guy figures to take you on some night when you leave late. It's happened."

I took out my compact and tilted it so that the mirror picked up the man's reflection. "He looks harmless to me. And tired."

"You from the country or something? Listen — give me a buzz before you leave tonight. I'll grab you a cab."

"All right. Meanwhile, I'd like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich."

"Take the hot roast beef."

"I don't —"

"I'm telling you — take the beef."

"You'd make a wonderful family man," I said resignedly.

"That ain't for me. You go home, you wipe noses, somebody's all the time in the bathroom." He shook his head emphatically. "That ain't for me."

"I'd love it."

"Well, make your move. I bet the doc ain't dragging his feet."

"I can't just walk out on my job. It's important. I worked hard to get it and I'm doing fine." I paused. "You see, Mickey, a woman's place isn't in the home unless she's ready."

"Maybe you're still shopping around," he said casually.

"How much do I owe you?" I said firmly.

"Seventy cents. The advice is free."

"It's better than the food. Thanks."

He followed me along the counter. "Anytime."

"Goodnight." I took off my rose and handed it to him. "I love you like a brother."

He tucked it into his cap and waved me out. Once I was in the foyer, a chilling night silence fell. The elevators were on automatic. I never did like that — I'm always afraid I'll get stuck. Sometimes I dream I'm in one and it falls and

falls. Arnold smiles suggestively when I tell him that and says it will pass with emotional fulfillment. I suppose he's talking about sex, but I don't see the connection at all. Anyway, it was a long, quiet ride to the thirty-fifth floor. They keep little night lights burning in the halls, and it's sort of hospitaly and antiseptic without people around. I get lonely without people. The gregarious instincts of extroverts, is what Arnold says.

Sometimes I wish Arnold didn't always have an explanation for everything I think or feel. I like to be a deep pool, like Greta Garbo, with an aura of the East and ancient Bacchanalian rites about me. Arnold makes me feel as though I'm having my teeth straightened, or taking corrective posture exercises. He kind of tidies up my mind for me. Guide to Betsy Simms' mind — see Dr. Arnold Allan. Just the same, I started to wish he were beside me. All Mickey's talk about the man in the drugstore had made me polka-dot with goose pimples. Somehow, I didn't want to go into the office.

"It's all gobbledy gook," I said out loud.

". . . Oook," echoed the empty hall.

"I'll just take a drink at the fountain first," I went on, still talking to myself.

". . . First . . ."

In the utter silence that fol-

lowed, the water had a loud, furious, tearing sound, and it was so cold it made my head begin to ache.

"Well!" I said, with firm resolution.

". . . Elll," said the hall.

"I think I'll just go in."

"Innnn . . ."

While I fumbled for the key, I remembered with terrible clarity every tale of terror I'd ever read; and then, like a slide being pushed across the eye of a reflector, a picture came jumping into my mind, a picture of the nervous rook fragments in the room just next to me, bumping, bumping, bumping against Mr. Jensen's carefully sealed vat.

As soon as I was inside the door, my nervous flutterings vanished. I snapped on the light and was once again in the calm, reasonable sanctuary of science. I looked about me with pride. Here was the nerve center of a thousand investigations, a thousand attacks on the mysteries of life and its preservation. Each test tube, each careful annotation, was a life line which led from darkness to light, from disease to health, from the present to the future.

"Of course!" I said aloud, as if something of irrefutable logic had been told me. After all, I lived and worked at the very heart of science. The thought made me move briskly into my own cubicle.

My white smock hung like a lithe and pliant ghost on the coat tree, and my daffodil still made an oasis in that business-like room. I put on the smock. Arnold would have said that it was a gesture of self-dramatization, but I found that wearing it settled me firmly to my work. I'm sort of moody about clothes anyway. Once I bought a blue velvet housecoat that was cut from here all the way to there. When I wore it I talked about love affairs and life and things like that. Ruthie got so bored with it she got me a seer-sucker one for Christmas. When I wear that I make pop-overs and sort my stockings and read house magazines. In my rainy-day tweeds I feel like that girl in Rebecca, and my nylon bathing suit is nothing if not an Esther Williams movie.

My smock is special, though. I feel useful and intelligent in it. But that's one of the things I *don't* tell Arnold. He'd say "Fetish", and spoil everything.

I had to walk through the main office to get to Jensen's lab. I noticed a large sheet of paper tacked on the bulletin board. It said *Attention*, in large red type, so I stopped. It was addressed to Mr. Randall; it stated that Mr. Jensen had felt quite ill, suddenly, and that he would probably not be in the next day. He could be reached at his home if any questions arose concerning the Santa Querido Meteor Report.

I finished reading it and turned away. I looked at the closed door to his lab. I thought I had heard a noise, a funny, scraping noise, like rock against glass. A sudden wind blew the door of the laboratory open and I could see the gleaming, soap-bubble shine of all those transparent containers, standing row upon row against the wall.

It was unmistakable — and it came with a jolting suddenness — the sound of splashing.

I don't know what I could have been frightened of — I did it without thinking — I took the knob and slammed the door shut. And then I stood there a moment staring at it. After a moment, my voice coming very thin, very unfamiliar, I managed to speak. "Who's in there?"

I bent against the closed door. The splashing sounds had stopped. I tried a different, a more cordial attack. "Nobody's in there, are you?" Of course there was no answer.

"Mice," I promised myself, and I walked boldly inside. I saw it, first thing.

I remember how my knees buckled. I remember that my mouth got all stiff, like when you have novocaine, and that my fingertips and toes went to sleep. I wanted to faint, but got only as far as being slightly whirly. I wasn't thinking straight, I knew that, and I wanted some air. The

room smelled strongly of formaldehyde and salt, and black spots were making little patterns in the air before me.

"It'll go away," I whispered to myself wildly. "Don't panic. Walk to the window and open it. Don't bolt or scream. There's a perfectly logical explanation. It's a rational world. You're tired. You admit you're nervous about being here. Breathe. In. Out."

Miraculously, I did get to the window. The night air came in cold and fresh. There were many stars, lovely starlight. I looked up at the heavens — but I wasn't fooling myself — I still remember that faint, greenish glow somewhere in the room behind me. I turned slowly.

"Oh . . ." I said. It wasn't a word. It was a moan, involuntary, from deep within me. For it was there, in plain sight, just as it had been before, beckoning to me, bathed in green light, there within the jar.

I did the only thing I could think of. I started to cry. I sat down just in front of it, put my face in my hands and wept quietly and persistently, wept to myself.

I heard the slow, delicate tapping on the glass. "Don't!" I implored. And I looked at it again.

The voice was masculine, the tongue English; I was looking at it directly. The lips moved, entreating me: "The lid — the lid —

lift up . . ." They said it to me, softly, as if from a great distance.

There was no longer any denying it, unless I wanted to doubt my sanity. It was a man, a beautiful man, only inches high, formed perfectly, like a lovely statuette, bobbing in the jar, living in the jar, breathing, the bubbles rising in a tiny stream, the eyes straining, fixed on mine, entreating me. And at the bottom of the jar was a layer of sand . . . sand . . . rock fragments from the fallen meteor, dissolved in salt. Rock brought here from Arizona, scraping, floating, struggling to live.

"Go away," I begged. "Don't be there." I cried harder.

The greenish light from within the jar suddenly brightened fiercely, like an emerald in the sun. "The lid," the lips said, whispering, muted, blending with the bubbles. "Turn it . . . free. . . ."

I felt the breath being mangled out of me with fear.

Did it read thoughts? "Don't be afraid," the muffled, indistinct whisper said.

"Aah!" I cried, whimpering. I turned and went away from it, putting the distance of the room between us. If it didn't pass away in another moment I would call for help. The light darted after me, like a beacon moving across black gulfs, green and probing.

And all the way across the room I heard its voice, weaker now and

trembling. "Please help me. . . ."

Maybe that did it. The terror in the room was shared, my fears echoed. The terrible racketing of my heart slowed. I glanced at it quickly, and then away again, as one does when confronted with great ugliness or deformity. But it wasn't ugly. My eyes returned, fascinated; it was the handsomest facsimile of a man I had ever seen. I went back. And opened the jar.

Then I put my hands over my eyes. I suppose I was expecting a rending explosion, a shattering noise; I suppose I wanted that, I suppose I hoped it would shatter everything, even my nightmare. But there was nothing like that. Only a deep sigh of relief. A voice low, near my ear, gentle, saying, "Thank you. Thank you. That was very good of you."

I remained frosted with fear, rigid. It went on: "Is my light getting into your eyes? It should let up any minute."

I peaked between my fingers and gasped. It had shot up, released from the jar; it had filled out, grown, miraculously, swiftly, and now stood looking down at me. I checked the details. It looked like a man. In every regard, except for that luminosity, that greenish radiation, it looked exactly — sweet heavens! — like a naked man. I groped wildly across the room, scrambled hastily to Dr. Jensen's cupboard and

found his smock. I threw it across the room.

"Put that on. Cover yourself up. Get dressed." I tried them all, determined that it should understand. Evidently it did. I heard the starched folds crackle. The green light gloomed and faded. I turned to face it again.

It was seated in a chair, looking at me with infinite respect and gratitude. It was smiling faintly. If I talk to it, I told myself, then there's no turning back. It becomes an admission; it's like committing myself. I stared at it unblinkingly.

We must have sat there for the better part of an hour. Some people, the kind who function well in a crisis, would have confronted it instantly, demanded an explanation and disposed of the problem in fifteen minutes. Not only that, but they would have told the story at dinner parties for months and kept everybody spellbound. I'm not that type; even little things set me off.

The real truth is that I've always dreamed of something glamorous and off-beat happening to me; but nothing ever has. Girls in my position just don't marry Rajahs or cross oceans on rafts or become career diplomats. The only extraordinary thing that ever did happen was the time I was chosen to be Miss Subway, but they picked me only because I'm

kind of typical looking. What's more, I haven't got the temperament to *make* anything come true. The girl downstairs bought a dog just to walk in the park in case she met someone else with a dog. She did, and now she lives on Riverside Drive and has a hyphenated name. I bought a goldfish for Ruthie. You can see the difference.

That's why I did no more than sit on my chair and stare at it. I confess that I sat on the edge of my chair, and that I was ready to bolt at its first flicker of movement. But it made no such gesture and the result was that we sat studying each other in silence. I knew I'd have to say something sooner or later, but I was trying various tacks in my mind. All of them seemed hopelessly inadequate in this particular crack. It looked awfully regal and imposing. Finally, I decided on boldness.

"I think you'd better explain all this," I said. I'm not much of an actress. I sounded the way I do when I'm telling the cleaner he made a mistake in the bill — thin and piping. I tried standing up. "I'm waiting," I said, but whatever confidence I had managed to find now oozed out of my manner. I sat down again, quickly.

It seemed really troubled. It kept shaking its head and looking around the place. I guess "despairing" describes it. "Please give me a moment," it said in a

nice voice. "I'm rather shaken up. I don't . . ." It stopped then and sighed.

There didn't seem to be any point in being bold in the face of that pathetic sigh. "Take your time," I said.

"I don't quite know where I am," it said slowly.

I felt the room begin to waver at me again. Urgently, I said, "Look! It's some kind of a trick, isn't it? You hypnotized me."

"I beg your pardon?" It still looked dazed.

"The jar, I mean — all that hocus-pocus."

It glanced at the jar with a shudder. "I'd be in there yet," it said in a strangled tone, "if it weren't for you."

And it bent its gaze on me. I like an adventurous situation as well as the next person, but this one was getting too deep, it was making that nervous flutter beat in my stomach again.

"You aren't trying to tell me that . . . well, that you — you came out of there?" I heard my voice scooting up the scale.

It put its head in its hands. "The shock," it muttered. "It tore everything loose. I felt myself spinning. . . ."

"But those rocks! They came from a meteor! It fell through space!"

"I fell for weeks," it said softly. "Maybe months. I thought that it

would go on and on forever."

Desperately, I cried, "Those rocks are fragments—torn off from another planet!"

"I know. . . ."

I felt my mouth go slack. "Where are you from?"

"Saturn." It rose and bowed slightly, then sat down again.

Inwardly, I began to recite a catechism to myself. I'm Betsy Simms. This is New York. I'm Betsy Simms. This is New York. I'm —

"Are you all right?" it asked solicitously. I nodded my head dumbly. It went on: "I see I'm a sort of phenomenon to you."

I wagged my head; it felt loose on my shoulders.

"I assure you," it said anxiously, "that I'm nothing to be afraid of."

"Oh, no?" I whispered.

"It's true I'm a little out of the ordinary—but so are *you*—to me. I'm as confused as you are."

"You speak English!" I said suddenly.

It nodded. "That was my job—at home. I'm an air waves analyst —"

"A what?"

"We send the waves through channels, decode them, reconstruct languages, and then —"

"Never mind," I said. "Some other time."

We sat there, looking at each other cautiously.

Then I broke the silence again.

"Listen, I've got to get rid of you. I don't know how to handle anything like this. I'm so shaky now I can't think straight. The only trouble is, I don't know who to call—the police or Bellevue —"

"It's a problem," it nodded.

I began to run my fingers through my hair. "But how will I explain you?" I whirled on it. "You know what'll happen, don't you? They'll book you as a psycho—and me, too, if I try to tell them who you really are." I paced up and down in the lab. "I couldn't even hide what you are—even if I wanted to, and I'm not saying that I do. Why, Holy Moses, you've got no identity; no driver's license or social security or draft card."

"I haven't—whatever they are."

"Couldn't you —" I turned to it again—"Couldn't you find some way to get back? To go home?"

Home. The word seemed to crystallize its dilemma. That sad, lost look came over its face again. "I don't think there is a way to get back," it said despairingly. "At least, no way occurs to me now. I don't even understand clearly how this happened, or why. . . ."

"We've got to think!" I said. I don't know what it was about him that made me use that companionable pronoun. Maybe it

was that ridiculous smock reaching to its knees, and that forlorn expression.

"Suppose — just suppose — I'm not promising anything — but suppose I could get you in a cab. If I walked into the apartment with something like you, Ruthie would blow her stack."

"Colloquialism?"

"Yes," I said shortly. I explored all the possibilities. "If you wandered off now, a policeman would pick you up." My voice trailed off. "They'd have you in the pokey in no time."

"I seem to be giving you a great deal of trouble."

Its voice was so mild and lost that I felt as if I'd kicked it in the shins. "Arnold," I said aloud. "I'll call Arnold."

A passing streak of moonlight crossed its face. I drew in my breath. It looked like a great Viking, huge and green and shining. "Not Arnold," I sighed, "he wouldn't buy it for a second."

"Whatever you decide," it said gently, "I'm entirely at your disposal."

"That's just it. How can I possibly dispose of you?" Then I blushed. "That sounded awfully rude. I'm sorry. I don't mean to hurt your feelings — if you have them."

"That's all right."

Suddenly it hit me. I was on the threshold of an adventure

that nobody living had ever had before. I was communicating with the expanding universe, in touch with one of the great riddles of the twentieth century. My life in science had given me insights into the courage of people who scratched their way bravely and blindly through the How and Why of things. Why should I turn my back on it?

Besides, it was so helpless, so cast adrift. It was all the stray dogs, lost cats and orphaned children I'd ever seen in my life. My heart went out to it.

"I'm going to help you!" I said breathlessly. I waxed more eloquent the longer I looked at it. "Here you are, dumped into a strange world you never asked for, with nobody to turn to. Yes, I *will* help you. You're not responsible for what's happened to you. You're not to blame, not a bit. Anyway, the world's full of crazy wild things. One more won't upset the balance of things. I'll simply —"

That stopped me short. *What* could I simply?

"I could keep you out of sight in the apartment. You could sleep on the couch, and then when it gets light go out on the fire-escape till Ruthie leaves. If anybody sees you, I'll say you came to wash the windows." I nodded happily. "That's not bad for a beginning. We'll go downstairs and get a cab."

That stopped me again. A cab. People would take it for a crackpot. Crackpot. The word rang through me like a bell. Why not?

"Listen," I said. "I'm going to muss up your hair and print you a sign, saying Come to Salvation. If anyone tries to stop us I'll just say Praise Be To — what's your name?"

"Yrtxxe," it said.

"Very pretty. I'll call you Sam. I'll say Praise Be To Sam, and you look wild-eyed."

I drew the sign and got it pinned to the front of its smock before I remembered Max and the man downstairs. I picked up the phone and called the drugstore.

"This is Betsy. I'm going home now. Is my shadow still there?"

"Yeah. Reading the magazines. He even bought one."

"Listen, Max, something sort of embarrassing has happened."

"What's the matter?"

"My cousin came over from Jackson Heights. He got spiffed at the Art Center Ball and dropped by to see if I was here. He looks awful, Maxie. He's wearing a smock and a sign, with his face all painted green. I want to get him out without any trouble. Could you flag me a cab?"

"I'll do better'n that. I'll come up and help you pilot him."

"No, don't do that. I mean, he's walking under his own power. He's mild as a lamb, really. Just get the cab and act like nothing

was going on. It's sort of — I mean — he's sort of sensitive, my cousin."

"Got you," he said. "You're on your way."

I hung up, limp with relief. "Let's go," I told it. "If anyone speaks to you, just answer Hallelujah. Nothing else. Just Hallelujah."

"It has a lyric sound." It tried it. "Hallelujah."

"Fine," I said, and switched out the lights. Right then and there I knew we were cooked. He was as burnished as old copper, and twice as shiny.

"You're glowing," I said in despair.

"Thank you," it said. "My color's always been good."

"If only you were A.C.," I muttered.

"Beg your pardon?"

"I'd short-circuit you."

It looked at me a moment. "The light disturbs you, doesn't it?"

"It's kind of pretty," I said gently. "Only it might stir up a ruckus." I paused. "Well, there's nothing we can do about it. We'll just have to chance it."

It followed me docilely into the elevator. "I hope you don't have a sinky stomach," I said, "but if you fell all the way from Saturn this should be a breeze." I pressed the button. The elevator descended gently.

It seemed to like it. "That was very pleasant," it said. "I don't suppose we'd have time to . . ." It lingered in the cage.

"The cab's waiting," I said firmly. "We haven't a minute to lose."

We went through the park on our way home. The skeletal trees and the sharp cold air made all this seem like a Halloween charade. It looked out the window, staring at everything, bright with interest.

"Remarkable," it said.

I almost laughed. There it was, the Eighth Wonder of the world, behaving like a kid at a circus.

"Did I say something unusual?"

"No. I was just thinking that you're hardly the type to behave like a visiting fireman. Still, why not? You're a stranger in town."

"You're attached to this place, aren't you?"

"I love it and I hate it," I said. "It lifts you up and it beats you down. It's too hot in August and too cold in December. It's the loneliest and most comforting place in the world." I glanced at it. "In my world, anyway. . ."

"Home is like that," it said quietly. It was remote, and a little sad.

"You know the great thing about this town?" I said urgently. "We get all kinds of people from all over, and before they know it

they feel like they've been here all their lives. We've even got a statue out in the harbor that says something like that on the base." I moved a little closer. "Take me. I come from Yakima, Washington, and my roommate Ruthie was born in San Diego. The man living downstairs is from Athens, Greece. All kinds. You'll see. You'll be all right. . ."

The cab had turned onto our street. "One thing," I said hurriedly. "Don't do anything on your own for the next day or two. Let me do the planning — or else we'll both end up in the soup. Idiomatic," I added.

I took it by the hand, a little gingerly, and we went inside. Fortunately, the hallway was empty. I left it at the top of the stairs and went ahead to check the apartment.

Ruthie was sleeping. She wears ear-plugs and eye pads, and nothing wakes her but the threat of cold water — so we were all right on that score. I stuck my head out of the door and beckoned to it.

"I didn't get a chance to clean up the place," I said, hurriedly picking up my bathrobe and a Turkish towel. "We're a little cramped." Suddenly, as we stood there together, just inside the door, the enormity of it all washed over me. It was so big, it was so good to look at, it was so much man, it was from Saturn — it was

from hunger. It was terrific!

"Where am I going to hide you?" I whispered desperately. I looked at the settle bench I had bought in Vermont — perfect for a Pilgrim, but it would pleat my visitor. Nobody in or out of this world could sleep on my Hitchcock chairs. That left the kitchen table, the top of the bookcase, and the bathtub.

"I'll give it to you straight," I said. "There's no bed for you."

It moistened a finger and held it up to the air. "Current's perfect," it said, "no pitch or down-draft."

"What?"

"I'll show you." It fell backwards. In another moment it was floating gently above me, six feet off the floor. It was late at night, but I watched it with my own eyes! Then it regained its feet again. "Any place without too much wind will do."

"No," I said firmly. "Suppose Ruthie should get up for a drink and run into *that*!"

It nodded its head in agreement. "Better not risk it."

"Can't you do it *our* way?"

"Yes. If I have to."

"All right." I sighed deeply. "I'll set my alarm for you for five-thirty. I know it's terribly early, but I'd rather be on the safe side. Now, when it goes off, you get up and crawl out there on the fire-escape. If anybody

looks out and sees you, just make a motion like this." I demonstrated. "They'll think you're the window-cleaner. Then, when Ruthie's gone, we'll have breakfast and make plans."

"That won't be necessary," it said. "I don't eat."

I took this in my stride. I was beginning to get oriented. "I'm not sorry to hear it," I said. "What with the cost of living and everything."

It looked at me puzzled. "It's an economic term," I went on. "It means that hamburger is a dollar a pound. Well, never mind. I'm not the only one who's tried to explain it."

I went into the bathroom and turned on the light. "In here." It appeared in the doorway. I pointed to the tub. "Sleep well," I said, "and try not to worry."

"You too."

That stopped me. I looked at it strangely. Its voice was intimate, compelling, affectionate. It made me suddenly feel shy with it. "Thanks," I said, and went into the bedroom.

I must have stayed awake until almost daylight, watching Ruthie. Outside of Rip Van Winkle, nobody's ever slept longer or harder than Ruthie. I dozed fitfully. I dreamt of Arnold and elevators, meteors and men eating crackers, until the alarm went off. I sat up stiffly, listened until I heard the

living room window raised, and then fell back exhausted until morning. Ruthie came in around eight o'clock to wake me up.

"You know," she began, "I ought to stay home today. I read my astrological forecast. It wasn't good."

I remained calm. "If they dock your check it won't be good, either."

"I don't like to go up against Fate," she said.

"Well, it's either that or Macy's. You owe them twelve-fifty on last month's bill."

"Say no more. I'm going." She put on her hat. "We're out of eggs, and the mice got in our shredded wheat. There's rye toast, though."

"Okay."

She sat down again. "Betts, you're pasty. What time did you get in last night?"

"Late — and I had nightmares."

"Something the matter?"

I could tell her now, I thought. "Ruthie," I said, "what would you say if —" I broke off and looked at her, so sane and crisp and feet-on-the-groundish. I clammed up.

"You in hock?"

I made a quick decision. "Well, if you could lend me five dollars. I hate to ask you."

"Look under the corn-meal. Take six if you need it. You mean to tell me you were awake all

night just because of this?"

I nodded.

"You goon." She got up and smoothed her dress. "You know you can have everything I've got — all ten of it." She patted her hat. "I've got to run. Oh, listen, one thing, honey. There was a terrible ring of dirt in the tub this morning. If you get a minute . . ."

"Sure," I said.

"You know, the plumber came yesterday to fix the john. Do you suppose he took a bath?"

"I don't know. . . ."

"It's kind of shiny. Almost green."

I wet my lips. "The ring?"

"Yeah."

"I'll take care of it. You'd better go, you're late."

She nodded and hurried to the door. "Oh, by the way, the landlady's got a window-washer. He's working off the kitchen, so don't be scared."

She was gone. I climbed into my robe and slippers and sped into the kitchen. It was there, patiently making sweeping motions at our window with a washcloth. When it saw me, it smiled and waved. I found myself thinking that Apollo must have looked like that with the morning sun behind him.

"Good morning," I called. "Come in."

It leapt through the open win-

dow and stood before me. Its legs were blue from the knees down and it shook.

"You're cold." I motioned it toward the stove and lit all the burners. "You've got to have some clothes, first thing." I gulped a cup of coffee. "I'll phone the lab and tell them I'll be late." I looked at it speculatively. "I think you're the Brooks Brothers type. Can you tell me your clothes size?"

"I've never worn any," it said politely. "Our climatic conditions are —"

"I'll manage," I said. "We're not expecting company, so you'll be all right here. Don't answer the phone — that thing — and keep the blinds pulled."

"Did you sleep well?" it asked as I hurried to the door.

I stopped. "Fine. Did you?"

"I thought about you."

My toes curled slightly in my woolly slippers, and a spot on the floor had my undivided attention.

"Do you mind my saying that to you?"

Thoughts of Arnold were suddenly with me. "Well," I said hesitantly. Then I gave up and took the bull by the horns. "Sam," I said, "I don't know anything about your world, but down here a situation like this isn't considered kosher. What I mean to say is: you'd better *not* think about me, at least during the night." I paused, suddenly

very embarrassed. "Maybe I'm jumping the gun." I risked a full look at his beguiling face. It remained charmingly attentive. "You don't understand anything I'm saying, do you?"

"The words are familiar," it said, puzzled.

"But you don't catch the tune." I took a deep breath and started over again. "Sam, there are lots of complications. Look, somebody else thinks about me."

"I see."

I wanted to drop that tack. "And there's my job," I said urgently. "I've got to be careful because of my job."

He remained silent, but he looked as bewildered as a pup left in a pound. "This is a democracy," I said at last. "You think what you want to."

"Very well," it said quietly.

"There are all kinds of things to read. If your taste runs to Jane Austin and Trollope, I have lots. Ruthie has scads of astrology booklets."

It looked at me serenely. "If it's all the same to you," it said, "I'll think about you."

It was a lovely full circle, like a man's arms around you. Right then and there I made one decision. I wouldn't be thinking of Sam as It anymore; he would be he to me from now on, and it was a lot more than a question of grammar.

When I finally tore myself away, I went down to Brooks Brothers. I bought all the things I wouldn't dare to give to Arnold. There were argyle socks (in green) and a Russel Nypish bow tie and a cashmere sweater the color of spring leaves. I bought shaving lotion and cuff links with an S on them and moccasins like the Princeton boys wear. I bought striped pajamas and nylon shorts and a salt and pepper tweed suit and a pipe, and I never had a better time in my life. Also, at the end of two hours and thirty minutes, I was broke, late for work, and troubled in my mind.

I took all those pretties with me to the office and deposited them in my locker. I was standing there when Dr. Jensen went by, looking pale and a great deal older than when I had seen him the day before. He turned back, distraught, snapping his fingers at his side, and spoke to me in a hollow voice. "Did you do the report, Betsy?"

"Uh-huh," I said laconically.

He moistened his lips. It was then that it struck me. He knew! "Dr. Jensen," I said. "Dr. Jensen — I'd like to talk to you about that rock."

"Perfectly ordinary rock," he said, like a man going down for the third time. "Nothing unusual. Nothing." His eyes met mine, and then they flew away. "I've put in for a vacation," he said. "I'm

very tired. "Really very tired."

"Yes, but —"

"Got to go now. Can't talk," he said, stuttering. I saw it was useless. He'd never admit it. He'd seen Sam, but he'd never talk. I let him go without another word.

The day was as long as a best-seller. Around five I went in to Mr. Randall and pleaded a headache. He let me go and I was home fifteen minutes before Ruthie was due. Sam was sitting in the dark when I opened the door. I could see his faint green shine, dimmer today as a result of his bath.

"Hi!" I said, struggling with my packages. "Bargain day at Brooks Brothers." I dumped them all on the couch and sank down beside them with a sigh. "Anything to report?"

"No," he said. "Nothing happened."

"I bought your stuff," I said. "You'd better climb into it because I'm going to introduce you to a friend, and I want you to look . . ." I paused. ". . . Human."

Then I began fumbling quickly with the boxes. "If you hate it, just say so." I held up the suit.

"Very handsome," he said. He liked the socks and the tie and the striped pajamas. Suddenly it was like a kid's Christmas. He held the sweater up and smiled, and he laughed out loud at the shorts, and I laughed too. I

stopped when he started to peel off the smock.

"Hey," I said. "In there."

He looked at me blankly. "Custom of the country," I said. He nodded and disappeared.

Five minutes later he came back in the doorway. Talk about Pygmalion and his Galatea. I had made myself a matinee idol out of one tweed suit, a bow tie, and a sweater. He was perfectly beautiful. I stared at him spellbound.

"Golly," I said in a small voice. For a moment the whole thing had me on the ropes. Then I won out over chemistry and motioned him to a place beside me. I took his hand in what I tried hard to make a sisterly gesture.

"Sam," I said, "I've got to tell my room-mate about you. She's a nice girl with a big heart, but the idea of you may be a little too much for her at first. I just want you to trust me. If I ask you to float . . . float. You may even have to shine in the dark." I looked at him wistfully. "It's a shame to make a sideshow out of you, but she's got to believe us. Okay?"

"What's your name?" he said suddenly.

"Betsy."

"Betsy," he said. The name sounded new and very sweet. "May I call you that?"

"Sure," I said weakly. Then I heard Ruthie on the stairs. "Get in there, quick, and stay

in there till I call for you."

He moved across the room swiftly, closing the bedroom door just as Ruthie came in. The boxes and tissue paper were still in plain sight. Ruthie glanced at them and then at me as she struggled out of her coat.

"Have you come into money?" she asked.

I brushed the boxes onto the floor and threw a newspaper over them so that the name was obscured. "I just got a few trifles."

"All those trifles for just five dollars?"

"Ruthie, sit down and compose yourself. I've got news for you."

Let me say at the outset that Ruthie has gone through a lot with me. She's nursed me through the mumps; she's enlarged on my Yakima, Washington, views of sex; she's helped me file my income tax. She knows I'm reasonably sound of mind and body. That is, she thought so, till I finished my story.

"Well," I said, after twenty minutes, "that's the long and short of it."

Ruthie being Ruthie, she didn't do what everybody does in the movies. She didn't call a doctor or tap her forehead or back away from me. She merely sat there in a very deep coma.

"Say something," I begged.

"I'm thinking," she answered quietly. And then she suddenly

stood up and screamed, loud and penetrating. "Good God! You mean he's here in this apartment!"

"Yes, he is. In the very next room."

"He was in this apartment all night!" The whole fantasy for her revolved around the fact that she had spent the night with him under the same roof.

"Yes, but that isn't the point, Ruthie."

"It is for the moment," she said, looking terribly white.

"First of all, do you believe me?"

She nodded dumbly.

"You're sure?" I persisted, like a prosecuting attorney.

"Listen," she said wearily. "Last week I went to a seance and some ectoplasm showed. I bought that. Why shouldn't I believe this?"

"Then can I bring him in?"

She hesitated a moment. "Is it scary?"

"He looks like Jean Marais," I said softly.

"Jean Marais," she repeated. "Call him in."

When Sam appeared, she looked at him and gasped. "Murder!" she breathed.

"Sam, this is Ruthie. She lives with me."

"Does it talk?" Ruthie whispered.

"Certainly!" I said, irritated.

Sam smiled. "Good evening,"

he said, as smoothly as Charles Boyer.

Ruthie just shook her head. "Can you beat it?"

"Better sit down, Sam," I said. "We've got to talk about our problem. Now look at him good, Ruthie."

It didn't seem to cause her any pain. She stared at him with a foolish smile.

That went on for quite some time. "Ruthie," I said firmly. "Ruthie, listen to me!"

She tore her gaze away. "Yes?" she said vaguely.

"Can we pass him off as a man?"

"What?"

"Can we pass him off as a man? That's our problem."

"As far as I'm concerned," she said appreciatively, "he's passed."

"I mean, those feelings aside," I said coldly. "Can we get him a place to live? Find him work? Can we introduce him to Arnold?"

"Any time," she said with conviction.

"We've got to be sure." I got up and paced the room restlessly. "You know that the lab is being investigated, I can't be seen with an unexplainable man, and I don't know *how* to explain him without going up for a lunacy hearing. Are you listening?"

"Sure," Ruthie said transfixed. "Sure."

"Well, we've got to try. Arnold's taking me to dinner to-

night. That'll be the acid test. You come along with Sam. He's a friend of yours from home."

"You know how I feel about my friends," she said heartily, her eyes gleaming.

I ignored that. "Sam, do you think you can go through with it?"

"Who is Arnold?" he said. "Your voice changes when you say his name."

"Go explain Arnold," Ruthie said wryly.

I decided I had to set the record straight, right then. The words didn't want to come. "Why don't you get dressed?" I said to Ruthie. She looked quickly at me and then at Sam. I looked at the floor. She left hurriedly.

"Arnold's a dear friend of long standing," I said all in one breath.

Sam took his new pipe out of his pocket and stroked it speculatively. "You belong to him," he said with great finality.

"Hey, wait a minute. I didn't say that."

"You don't care to belong to him?"

It was like talking basic English. With Sam it was either yes or no. "I'm thinking about belonging to him," I said weakly. "A sort of incubation period."

"Ah," he said unhappily. "You're thinking about it. That's something I can understand very well." He rose, bowed slightly,

and quickly sat down again.

I didn't have time to pursue the subject. I was supposed to meet Arnold at Fabrizio's in fifteen minutes and I hadn't changed. "I've got to change," I said miserably, "but I'll see you later."

Arnold has his own special table in the corner. His eyes are weak so he sits out of the light and away from the noise. He had a drink waiting for me and there was wine cooling in an ice bucket. I sank into my chair, smiled wanly and dove into the drink.

"Tired, darling?"

"Collapsed. Arnold, before we settle down, I'm afraid we're not going to be alone."

I told him about Ruthie and her friend. He took it graciously but not without comment. "Do you consciously try *not* to be alone with me?" he asked patiently.

I looked at him. He's one of those Distinguished Men ads—you've seen the pictures. "Arnold," I said, "you know that isn't true."

"It has to be," he said sternly, "or we would have been married long ago." He leaned across the table and took my hand. "Leda could handle my practice for a while. We'll go to Florence for a honeymoon."

I felt like a package that was being wrapped up. "Wait," I cried, "let me say something."

He sat back in his chair, fingertips together, silent as a doctor listening to symptoms. But now that it was time for me to speak, all I could think to say was, "What's the rush?"

"There's the biological factor, for one thing. I'm only human."

I drank some more of my drink. "You know my views on that," I said solemnly.

"I do. They're lofty." He sighed. "Damn it, Betsy, you tempt me. I've faced that unalterable fact. I asked you to marry me. I'm asking you again."

"I don't know what's the matter with me!" I wailed.

"You're suffering from high moral tone," he said, handing me his hanky. I hid my face in it and thought of the strange and giddy feelings I had had since I found Sam, and cried all the harder.

"My dear," said Arnold contritely, "you *are* frazzled. I think the strain of your job's really telling. We won't talk about it anymore tonight. Better?"

I wiped the mascara out of my eyes and smiled wanly. "Yes, thank you, Arnold."

"All right. The beast in me is subdued and you're entirely safe."

"Yes, thank you, Arnold."

Maybe *his* beast was subdued, I thought, but mine was on the prowl for the first time in my life — and its prey was coming across the room toward me.

Ruthie came in as though she were leading a band. And Sam was enough to strike one up, too, as he threaded his way among the tables. Even Arnold's eyes widened.

"He's somewhat larger than life-size," he muttered. "Who is it?"

"Sam Saturnis," I said. "I think he's from San Diego."

"They grow them big in Southern California," Arnold said, standing up.

Ruthie beamed down at me. "We got here," she said triumphantly. Then, as I frowned, she burred at Arnold, "I was afraid I'd lose Sam. It's his first time in the city."

The two men shook hands. I noticed with a kind of primeval satisfaction that Arnold winced at the grip. Then I was ashamed of myself, so I moved closer to him.

"Where are you staying?" Arnold asked.

"With friends," Sam said easily.

"What's your work?"

"Air analysis."

"He's in the radio business!" I said desperately.

"Oh, yes," Arnold said, and a silence fell. We all smiled at one another.

Ruthie eyed the wine bottle frantically. "Is that private stock?" she said meaningfully.

Arnold beckoned for glasses. Sam took his and put it carefully

aside. Arnold's face darkened. "I hope you're not one of those California wine enthusiasts," he said.

"Drink up!" I shouted.

Sam looked at his glass with bewilderment. "How?" he asked.

"Here's how!" I said emphatically, and tossed mine off in one swallow. Sam nodded imperceptibly and did likewise. Arnold's mouth went slack.

I held out my glass imperiously. Then I felt Ruthie's hand clutching my wrist. "You'll get coddled," she said firmly, "and you know how addled you get when you get coddled."

I set the glass down with a click. "My," I said, "but that was refreshing. How do you feel, Sam?"

It was classic. "It tickles," he said, "as it makes its way, all the way down. That's all."

"Yes," Arnold said. "Well."

"Sam's a teetotaler, mostly," Ruthie explained.

There was another silence. Somewhere in the background a rhumba band began to throb urgently. "You don't rhumba, do you, Arnold?"

"I drink," Arnold said, filling his glass again, "and then I rhumba."

Sam glanced out at the dance floor. "I believe I could do that," he said. Ruthie and I exchanged looks.

"It tickles," Arnold said sourly.

"Try it with me," I said and

got up. We moved out on the floor together. Space and time fell away. I leaned closer to him. There was no doubt about it. We were star-crossed.

"Something smells good," Sam said.

"It's me," I told him happily. "Ten dollars an ounce."

"You're soft to the touch," Sam said. "Let's take a walk."

I looked at him, startled. "I can't," I said mournfully.

"You're thinking about him." He motioned toward Arnold.

"Yes . . . I guess so. . . ."

"You'll think about me sooner or later," he said complacently. "I'll wait."

By the time we got back to the table, Arnold had taken the bottle out of the wine cooler, plunked it solidly down before him, and was cradling it in his arms. Ruthie raised her eyebrows in warning. Arnold caught the grimace. "Sublimation," he said loudly. "It's any man's prerogative. Isn't that right, Saturnis?"

"Please, Arnold," I begged him. "No shop talk."

Arnold had a none too steady gaze fixed on Sam. "What'd you say your line of work was?"

"He's in radio. I've already told you."

"He didn't tell me. I'd like to hear it from him."

I started to answer, but Sam took over like a pinch hitter. "I'm

what you might call the head of a station. I do experimental work in what you people would probably call electronics. I work for — well, I believe you call it the Government."

My hands were sticky with nervousness. Arnold digested all that, and then he asked crisply, "Married?"

"Arnold, what's the matter with you?" I said.

"Yes," echoed Ruthie. "That's a chair he's sitting in, not a couch. Business must be slow."

"Sorry," Arnold mumbled. Then, by way of explanation, he turned back to Sam. "You're too big. Big guys make me combative. Anxiety neurosis." He held out his hand. "Forget it."

"Sure," said Sam. "Anybody can blow his top." He looked at me, pleased with himself. "Colloquialism."

"Ruthie," I said quickly, "you look like you're getting a headache."

"No, it's in my neck," she said resignedly. "Come on, Sam."

"Going?" Arnold asked with vast relief.

"I never stay more than ten minutes anywhere," Ruthie told him bitterly. She took Sam by the arm. "We loved it." And then, menacingly to me, she said, "I'll see you at home."

Arnold watched them depart, his face brightening as they passed out of sight. "Something really

funny about that guy. . . ."

"I thought he was sort of nice."

He tapped the bottle nervously. "I'm out of training. I guess I must be a little tight."

"What is it?" I tried to keep my voice calm and indifferent.

"Him. That fellow. Something the matter. What was it? I've got it right on the tip of my tongue. What?" He thought a moment, frowning. "Ruthie known him long?"

"Ages," I said. "Let's not talk about him any more." All in the same breath. "Next week's my vacation. Am I going to see you?"

His face fell. "Medical convention in Boston. Leda and I planned to take in the whole session. But if you're free I'll cut it short."

"Don't do that. I've got scads of things to do."

"Like what?" he said fondly.

I ticked them off in my mind. Find Sam a place to live. Sit in a warm, silent museum with him at my side. See how he'd react to a chocolate sundae, my red knitted dress, and a kiss in the dark.

"Silly things," I said to Arnold.

"I was going to paint our apartment and make myself some harem pajamas and cook foreign — things like that."

"I wish I could think what it was about him," he said softly, and then he shook his head, as if to clear it. "I'll call you every



night from the hotel in Boston."

He did, too, but the days were mine and Sam's. I began by telling Ruthie I was going to take him house-hunting. "Somebody's bound to find out he's living here, and this week's the only time I have to get him settled."

Ruthie looked the way she did when her pet gold fish died. "I've gotten used to him," she said. "Couldn't we keep him a little bit longer?"

I felt the same way myself, but Ruthie's voicing it put new resolution into me. "No. It isn't nice. After all, he isn't even a relation."

"He could be," she said. "Just for the asking." I looked at her coldly, so she changed her tactics. "He doesn't cost us anything."

"Look, he's not a pet dog. He's —"

"What is he! See — you can't answer."

"That's irrelevant," I said.

"You know what I think?" Ruthie was looking at me steadily. "I think you've got a yen for him. It's like when you're dieting — you won't let me keep cookies in the house."

"It's not the same at all."

"Then why are you giving him the bum's rush?"

Ruthie and I never fight, but I felt we were close to it then. "I found him, didn't I!" I said angrily. "Finders keepers! I can do what I want with him! I'm moving him out."

I went to fetch Sam. He was doing the breakfast dishes. He'd learned how the tap works and he found the process intriguing. I asked him to come with me.

We went out into the crisp daylight. I wanted to find him a place with charm, so he wouldn't be lonely or lost. I also had to find a way to tell him what I was doing without making him feel abandoned.

We walked until we came to the Village. The park was empty except for a man feeding crackers to the pigeons. I stared at him moodily for at least a minute before I made the connection. Crackers. My shadow from the drugstore. I squinted at him and recognized the wan, polite face.

I turned up my coat collar and sat so that Sam blocked him out. "Sam," I said, "the time has come." I took his large, warm hand. "I'll come and see you as often as I can, and this week we'll do all kinds of nice things together."

"I understand," he said quietly. "You can't go on keeping me."

My throat thickened the way it does when I'm going to sneeze or cry. "I'll find you a good place." I held his hand tightly. "Do you think you can manage everything — living by yourself?"

"I think so. I've been watching you closely these few days. I've learned a lot."

"You're very brave," I said tenderly. "And very smart. I'll

bet you were a V.I.P. at home."

"What's that?"

"Very Important Person."

He shook his head. Over his shoulder I could see my friend, still there. I said, "I wouldn't turn you out like this if it weren't for —" I motioned in the direction of the cracker-man.

"What's he got to do with it?"

"He's following me. He *has* been — for days and days. You see, Sam, I've got a job I have to protect. It's important to me, and to lots of other people, too. I'd have a hard time telling anybody about you."

"I see that."

"I'll show you how to send your laundry out, and how to use that telephone so you can call me if anything goes wrong."

He listened to me attentively, but there was no sign of the regret I hoped to see on his face.

"And that's about it," I said. I waited a moment. He said nothing. "Maybe you can think of something I've overlooked," I said hopefully.

"No, nothing." He glanced at the man feeding the pigeons. "Do you want him to follow you?"

"He has a right to. Besides," I added demurely, "you're the only thing I've ever had to hide in my life." The man was watching us intently now. I stood up. "We'd better get started."

We found a little place under

the eaves in a funny, sagging old house near the park. It was on a narrow, sedate street which still had the high-collared respectability of Henry James' New York. The landlady was Swedish and nearsighted. "This is a gentleman-only house," she said, peering at me.

"I'm just helping my cousin settle in," I told her. "My aunt specifically wanted me to help him settle in."

"That may be as is," she said, "but rent in advance, no smoking in bed or cooking whatsoever."

"No problem there," I muttered, and we followed her up the stairs. The room was lovely, full of nooks and crannies and anti-macassars. It was the kind of room to lie abed in with someone you loved when the rain sounded on the roof. It was a room for tea parties and the smell of lavender sachet, and I stood in it with a man from another world who didn't know I was alive. I sighed and sat down on the brass bed. It had a friendly creak. Sam remained planted firmly in the middle of the room.

"Look at your view," I said, strangled with the sense of intimacy and remoteness, both at the same time, which emanated from him.

He moved obediently to the window. "Roofs," he said. "And sky." His tone softened over that. "Sky . . . Blue sky . . .

It's somewhere out there . . . my home. . . ."

I came and stood beside him. He didn't stir. He seemed lost to me as he stared out the window. I wanted to wrench him back down to Earth — to fix him here — to keep him here. My shoulder touched his. His eyes remained on the horizon.

"Sam," I said, in my most seductive tone. "Look at me."

Reluctantly, he dropped his gaze. I had had momentary wild urges, but they paled and vanished under that curiously unemotional look. What was the matter with him! Or better yet, what was the matter with me? I don't like to brag, but nothing like this had ever happened to me. There *is* a certain class of men who respond to my type — if you happen to like medium to small brunettes with good dispositions and acceptable measurements. But not old Sam. Oh, no.

I said, "Okay, I'm a dud. Forget it."

He answered slowly. "Betsy, are you trying to tell me something?"

"Who — me?" I said dejectedly. "What gave you that idea?"

He put his hand under my chin and tilted my head up. "We're friends, aren't we?"

"I'll settle for that," I sighed. "If that's all I have coming. I'm not one to press an issue."

He turned away from the window. "I'd better forget all that

out there. Begin making a life for myself here." He patted me impersonally. "You'll have to show me how."

"How far would you care to take that?" I said tightly. "There's a lot to living."

"Tell me," he said in an interested tone.

"I'll show you — up to a point."

I showed him — up to a point.

After that we went on the town. I bought him a soda at Schrafts and made him drink it. "Some people eat to live. That doesn't apply in your case. You can live to eat. Call it pleasure and dive in." He liked it. He drank three in a row. I took him tea-dancing on the St. Regis Roof. There was a mood in the room of confidence and promise; he liked that, too. We went to the theatre and the Museum of Modern Art. We window shopped at twilight and walked through St. Patrick's. We went ice-skating at the Center and buying at Lord and Taylor. We saw the ocean liners come in at the pier and rode a bus through the Bronx. We went to the zoo and the aquarium and drove through Holland Tunnel. We went to Yankee Stadium and Madison Square Garden, a UN session and a burleycue. It was a three-ring circus, a Roman Holiday, a sob story. I ended up weary, broke, and crazy in love.

The Sunday night before I had

to go back to work I left him alone at his apartment and holed in to check the damages to my heart, my bank account and my morale. Ruthie made me milk-toast for supper and sat with me while I put my hair up.

"Well," she said owlishly, "you've had yourself quite a time."

"Yes," I said weakly.

"Arnold has called and called."

"What did you tell him?" I asked in a small voice.

"I said you had taken cold and gone to Connecticut to recover. I said you sent him your love but you were too stuffy and miserable to talk to anyone."

"Did he believe you?"

"No. He asked about my friend Sam."

"Oh . . ."

"What about my friend Sam?" she asked evenly.

I put my head under the pillows. "I love that thing!" I wailed. "I love him like he was flesh and blood!"

"Come out. Let's talk about it."

"There's not much to say." I looked at her with tearful eyes. "I've got news for you. I don't think he knows anything about love. *Anything*," I repeated.

"Oh, no!" Ruthie said, paling.

I nodded vigorously. "I think they have other methods. Something like that. It must be!"

"Keen," she said. "Now, all

you have to do is dump Arnold, learn all about Saturnic birds and bees, and you're in business."

"Don't joke," I said. "I'm so unhappy I could die."

Ruthie sighed. "Gee, honey, I don't know what to tell you. It's outside my range. Nothing like this has ever happened to me."

"Nothing like this has ever happened to anyone!" I cried. "This is a *first*."

"Well, you know that thing — that saying — East is East, and never the twain. Maybe the same thing goes between you and Sam. Birds of a feather stick together. But this one's an odd duck, so maybe you'd better forget all about it."

"He's so touching," I said. "He's so gentle. He's so kind. He's so cuddly."

"All six feet four?"

"He's like a beautiful green meadow — clean and quiet and peaceful."

"You *have* got it."

"I've got it. But what'll I do with it?"

"I think you'd better see more of a certain psychiatrist," she said. "And he's a good guy, too."

I lay back on the couch, drained, limp and languid. "I guess so. . . ."

Then the phone rang. "I don't want to talk to Arnold," I said. "Not tonight."

Ruthie picked up the phone, listened a minute and then handed

it to me, wordlessly. It was Sam. "Betsy," he said softly. "I know it's late but I've got to see you."

My blood pressure began to rise. "Oh," I said swiftly, "I *never* go to bed before one."

His voice came over the line vigorously. "I believe the time has come. The time for us to take a walk."

"Yes," I said, all choked up. "That would be lovely."

"I'll meet you in ten minutes, downstairs."

I hung up and turned to Ruthie, bright-eyed. "He wants to take a walk."

"You see," she said. "You figured it wrong. He's just a slow starter."

I put on my best sweater and all the perfume in the house. "Wish me luck," I said, and I went downstairs and waited with my nose pressed against the glass of the door till I saw him coming.

The park was cold and frosty and the benches were damp, but it could have been a beach in Bermuda as far as I was concerned. I was generating enough warmth for the Tropic of Capricorn.

Sam took his pipe out and put it in his mouth. He looked calm and reflective and wise. He said, "Betsy, close your eyes."

I took a deep breath and did so. Expectantly, I raised my face to

him. Nothing happened. Nothing.

I waited. Minutes passed. He remained silent by my side.

I took a chance and stole a glance at him. His eyes were shut, screwed tight with some kind of enormous effort — and yet there was a passionately tender look on his face. It must have been some kind of a strain for him, because he was breathing hard.

"Sam," I said softly, after awhile. "I'm over here. At your side."

His eyes opened at that. He looked at me hopefully, yearningly. "Well?" he said.

"Well, what?" I asked gently, slightly bewildered.

His face sagged in disappointment. "You didn't feel anything?"

"Sam," I said desperately. "Listen. I'll tell you how I feel!"

He shook his head slowly. "We didn't make contact," he said sorrowfully.

I looked at him.

"My mind went out to meet yours," he said. "But they didn't meet. Yours wasn't there. If they'd touched, you would have known it. It's electricity. There's no mistaking it when it hits you."

"Wait a minute," I said. "I'm a little confused."

"I asked you to take a walk," he said. "When you accepted, I hoped —"

"I take walks all the time. What's that got to do with it?"

"Of course," he said. "How could you be expected to know?" He paused a moment. "At home, when a man and a woman think that they love each other, they take walks together. It's as simple as that. It means they want to contact each other's minds — establish a current. That's what we call it — Going for a walk. . . ."

"Holy Moses!" I said. "Is that how you do it up there?"

In answer, he grabbed me fiercely by the shoulders. "Think!" he said wildly. "Concentrate! The way I have since I first saw you!"

"Darling, listen," I said hurriedly. "There's something I must tell you."

But he couldn't be stopped. His voice was shaking with passion. "I know you've been thinking about Arnold. Forget him." He whirled me around, pulling me closer to stare down at me. "You want to. I know you do. That much I've felt all along. At least that much. Betsy!" he said, "make contact! Try!"

Feverishly, I said, "You don't understand. Look. Things are different here. Lots of things. You've seen that for yourself. We eat. You don't. You glow. We don't. You *think* about someone you love — you concentrate. So do we, but — well, that isn't all."

He began to smile, as if there had been a great illumination, a light dawning. "Ah," he said. "Is

that what it is? I didn't know —"

"Yes," I said, and I puddled some dirt around with my foot.

He moved closer to me. His mouth brushed my ear. "When you love someone — what happens?"

I blushed furiously. "Well," I said, clearing my throat. Golly. . . .

"My thoughts are close to you," he whispered. "Don't be afraid."

"I'm embarrassed," I cried. "I've never explained the facts of life to anyone. I didn't find out myself until I was fifteen."

"Isn't it pleasant?" he asked, troubled.

"It's . . . it's wonderful," I muttered, "only I don't think I can talk about it."

"Betsy," he implored, "I *must* know. You're the only person who can tell me."

"Sam," I said desperately. "Don't you *feel* anything for me?"

He looked at me blankly. I blushed again, to the roots of my hair. "It's like this," I said in a quavery voice, "when I think about you — things happen to me."

"What kind of things?"

"Well, some are chemical, and some are psychological, and —" I broke off. "This is insane. You can't be told about it. It's something you feel or you don't."

He was silent. I turned to him,

anguished. "We're worlds apart, Sam. That's all." I got up reluctantly and put my hands against his face. "I'm glad you don't know what you're missing," I told him gently, and then I bent down and kissed him tenderly on the forehead. How I'd wanted to do that — for so long! It didn't take. I suddenly felt the cold of the park and the chill of the wet benches. The trees had never seemed so lifeless; the sky so black and unfriendly.

I'll say this for him. He did throw a bone in my direction. When he deposited me at my door again he made a last try. We stood together under the lamplight just like any other boy and girl. It was touchingly ordinary, the immemorial posture of lovers. "Betsy," he said fervently, "couldn't you . . . *show me?*"

I sighed bitterly. There I was, up against my whole twenty-three years of what Arnold calls my high moral tone. Explain it to *any* man, let alone a man from another world. I took a deep breath and plunged. "Sam, dear, I'd like nothing better, but —" I was stymied. I tried again. "Just *showing* you wouldn't be love. I've had plenty of chances to show men. Any girl who isn't a lemon has plenty of chances. But *loving* someone is something else."

He said, "Why?"

"People have been asking them-

selves that ever since Adam and Eve."

"When I feel it, will I know it?" His face was strained and anxious. "Will I be sure?"

"It'll hit you like a Sherman Tank," I said.

We lingered there another moment, looking at each other in the darkness. It was a terribly empty moment. I turned and ran into the house. I was crying and I didn't want him to see that. My nose turns red when I cry.

I went to work the next day feeling like the third act of *Camille*. I hadn't even put my hair up or anything, and I wore an old black suit that always makes me behave like a sad French movie. The minute I came into the office I knew something was wrong. Everybody in the lab looked at me sideways and nobody except the elevator boy said good morning. Even my daffodil had died. I was just about to throw it into the waste basket when Mr. Randall came into my cubicle. He usually had a gentle grandfatherly face, but today it wore a "this is going to hurt me more than you" expression.

"Betsy," he said quietly, "don't bother to change. Just step into my office. There's a gentleman there who wants to speak to you."

My mouth got as dry as a gravel path and my knees went suddenly soft. "Now?" I said.

"Just tell the truth, Betsy, for all our sakes."

I followed him in and he was there, as I knew he would be. The cracker man. He stood up when I came in.

Mr. Randall said, "This is Mr. Sharpe, who has been investigating you."

Mr. Sharpe smiled and said, "Good morning."

I was so nervous I almost dropped a curtsy. Mr. Randall shoved a chair under me and I collapsed into it gratefully. Mr. Sharpe held out a pack of cigarettes. "Smoke?"

"No, thanks."

He lit one for himself and drew up a chair. "Did you enjoy your vacation?" he asked.

"Yes . . ."

"You seemed to." He smiled again, still friendly, but it reminded me of a doctor about to administer a hypodermic. I looked out the window. "Miss Simms," he said, "you're aware that the Severn Labs have been under investigation for some time."

"That's what Mr. Randall said."

"You know why?"

"Yes. Some of us may be going to Los Alamos."

"That's right. You know the nature of the work being done there?"

"Yes."

"You understand its importance to the country?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then you understand how certain we must be of the personnel working there."

"Yes."

"Miss Simms, who has been your companion for the last week?"

My ears began to ring violently. "Could I have a drink?" I asked pitiously.

"Of course." Mr. Randall poured me a glass from the carafe on his desk and handed it to me. I noticed with a sinking heart that his hand was shaking. I tried to smile at him and failed.

"Better?" asked Mr. Sharpe.

"I had something in my throat."

"Can you answer my question?"

"He's a friend," I said.

"What's his name?"

"Saturnis," I said, and I choked over it.

"More water?" asked Mr. Randall.

"Please." I drank it in little tiny sips. The longer it lasted the better I liked it. Finally it was gone. I looked up. Mr. Sharpe was still there, waiting.

"This Mr. Saturnis," he continued, "how long have you known him?"

"A little while."

"And what, may I ask, is the nature of your relationship?"

"Friends," I insisted. "We're friends."

"I see." He and Mr. Randall looked at each other.

"Miss Simms," said Mr. Sharpe, "we have kept a close check on your activities for the last six months. During that period we have no record of this man. He appeared shortly after the prospect of your going to Los Alamos. We have not been able to establish any kind of identification for him. We'd like you to help us."

"Betsy," Mr. Randall said, "is there anything you want to tell us? Anything you're trying to hide?"

I looked from one to the other of them. "I have nothing to tell you," I said dully. "There's nothing I *can* tell you."

Mr. Sharpe looked unhappy. "Your friend has been taken into custody pending a fuller investigation. I'm afraid we'll have to hold you, too." He looked at me with his mild, troubled face. "I urge you to give us every cooperation."

The atmosphere at City Hall was a little more on the antiseptic side. I could have taken even that, but they brought me face to face with Sam. I felt like Mata Hari, but I didn't react. Then they brought me into Mr. Sharpe's office and a man with a notebook came in, too.

"If you're involved with this man," Mr. Sharpe said gently, "I advise you not to take the full load on yourself. You won't be protecting him. If he's actually a spy, we'll get him, whether you cover

for him or not. That's all. Now would you care to make a statement?"

It was zero hour and I knew it. "Okay," I said hesitantly, "but remember, you asked me." I paused slightly. "The man I've been meeting isn't a man at all. I don't know quite what to call him. He arrived two weeks ago in the Santa Querido meteoric rock which fell from Saturn."

I folded my hands in my lap and waited, rather primly I confess. It was my inning and I knew it. The man who was taking notes gaped at me — and then a look of great compassion crossed his face. Mr. Sharpe's eyebrows met in a frown of disapproval.

"This is no time for levity, Miss Simms. A great deal is at stake here."

"You don't have to tell me that. I've been half out of my mind ever since it happened."

The stenographer looked at me as if 'half out of my mind' was a conservative estimate. Once I'd made the initial plunge I couldn't be stopped. I told the whole story with all the trimmings, except for the personal details which wasn't any of their business anyway. When I was all through, Mr. Sharpe took out his handkerchief and mopped his face. Then he stared at the light fixture for an eternity. Then he looked at me.

He only said, "Holy Toledo."

But a moment later he was turn-

ing to the stenographer. "Bring him in," he said. "And keep those notes close to your chest till we check."

Sam followed the man in. "I've told them, Sam," I said hurriedly.

"I'd appreciate it if you let me do the talking," Mr. Sharpe said. He was staring raptly at Sam. The grilling began. It was almost ten o'clock at night before someone was sent out for coffee and sandwiches. We were all exhausted. Mr. Sharpe had taken off his tie. He had run his fingers wildly through his hair. He had called a conference. We just told the story over and over. Four or five officers were ringed around us. At last a numb silence descended. Then Mr. Sharpe spoke. "He's either a super spy or he's what he says he is. We can't find a single item on him, can we?"

"No." It was a chorus of replies.

"You'd have just that," I said hotly, "if he were a real person. You'd have a birth certificate or a draft card or something."

"Not if he were a foreigner. Still, nobody answering his description has entered this country by any method known to us." Mr. Sharpe wrenched at his collar as if it were choking him. "I don't know," he muttered. "I don't know. . . ."

At last he turned to one of his men. "Get a doc in here. We'll

give him a complete physical."

After a few moments they led Sam out. The doctor came in later and shrugged. "Homo Sapiens," he said. "Just like the rest of us."

Mr. Sharpe paced like a caged animal. Cigarette smoke swirled around the room like a witches' brew. Then he said desperately, "We got to try everything. Get that psychiatrist. We'll run intelligence tests on it and see if anything shows. Maybe we can get a lead."

Of course that psychiatrist had to turn out to be Arnold. It was one in the morning before they located him. He came in with an obliging smile on his face. It froze as Mr. Sharpe explained my presence, and it left his face entirely when they got to the part about Sam.

"It's a form of hypnosis," he said. "I know Miss Simms has been under a great strain. She could very well be a subject for mesmerism if the approach were convincing." He looked coldly at Sam. "I'm prepared to make a thorough examination."

"Can you do it now?"

"I'll need the assistance of my colleague. First thing in the morning?"

Mr. Sharpe agreed.

I guess they kept poor Sam in the lock-up that night. They led him away, and all I could do was stand on tip-toe and wave encouragement to him over their heads.

The next morning we all assembled in Arnold's office. It's one of those suave places with cheery prints and lots of leather-bound books. Leda was there, too, big as life. She was wearing a little black dress that cost as much as my income tax and looked as if it had been painted on.

I'm not trying to undersell her. She's an intellectual, all right, but strictly sugar-coated. She had her hair done like a Madonna, and when she smiled the temperature of the room rose. Arnold had already briefed her on Sam. She shook hands with him like he was visiting royalty, with a 'we understand, don't we' look on her face.

We all sat down facing Leda and Arnold. Sam wasn't the least bit nervous. He glanced at the charts and blocks on the big desk and grinned. The investigators kept their eyes on him. Arnold avoided me as much as he could, but it wasn't meanness. I guess he thought he was being delicate about the whole thing.

For three-and-a-half hours they ran all the intelligence tests on him. He figured how many gallons Judy would have to take to point A in twenty minutes in a bucket that was six inches deep. He looked at little ink blots and told Arnold what significance they had for him (mostly he said they were just little ink blots, which I thought was quite sensible). He picked his favorite color (green)

and he put square blocks in square holes without being fooled for a minute. I think he enjoyed himself very much.

Then they got to the subtle part. Arnold asked Sam if he minded a rather intimate discussion in front of people — if it would inhibit him. Sam was perfectly agreeable, so they started off. I kept praying they wouldn't get to his libido, because then things would be said that would be best left unsaid. Then I saw that it was Leda who was taking over and I began to get hot under the collar. She kept looking at him as if she were a fellow Saturnite, if that's what you call them, and it was beginning to feel like a private club. She motioned him to a seat beside her and I knew he was getting lungsful of that jasmine perfume she wears.

"Do we seem very strange to you?" she asked with considerable charm.

"Not at all."

"Good. We don't want any barriers."

"I take it you want me to talk about myself," Sam said.

Leda made it an invitation. "Would you?" she said softly.

The investigators leaned forward tensely. Sam talked. It was very highly-colored, to say the least; a kind of futuristic David Copperfield. He told everything: how he had lived and worked, what home looked like, how he



had arrived on Earth, what he thought of Manhattan. It was super-science fiction with sex-appeal. Leda felt it, too. She moved a little closer to him and hung breathlessly on every word.

When he had finished, everyone leaned back and gasped, the way you do when somebody has been safely hauled off a high place. Arnold was still a holdout. He kept tapping the tips of his fingers together and raising his eyebrows, but he let Sam finish before he beckoned to Leda. They went off into another room for a huddle. When they came back, Arnold's face was angry.

"There's some disagreement between my colleague and myself."

"Is he or isn't he?" Mr. Sharpe asked pointedly. "That's all we're here for."

"I think he's psychotic. Like some of them, very clever. Dr. Taylor, on the other hand, feels he's genuinely a being —" Arnold paused, as if he couldn't quite bring himself to say it. "—a being from another world."

Mr. Sharpe's nerves were gone. "Great. What are we supposed to do now?"

I was tired and all keyed-up. I jumped to my feet at that and shouted to Sam, "Float, Sam! Show them!"

"I don't know, Betsy," he said, flushing.

"They think you're a liar. Show

them. For my sake." I was awfully emotional right then. I looked at Arnold. His face was grave and a little sad.

"What's this?" Mr. Sharpe asked, bewildered. "What's going on?"

"Only this," Sam said, and he lay back on the air.

There was a long silence in the room.

Sam climbed down again. A clamor broke out. Arnold held up his hand. "Wait a minute," he said. "There have been cases of Hindu fakirs. . . ."

Leda shouted him down. "Why fight it? I think it's thrilling!" There was exultation in her voice.

Arnold had objected only because of his own, dark reasons. I knew he believed at last; he stood there blinking rapidly and looking quite frightened. As for Mr. Sharpe, he had sat down as though suddenly hit in the stomach. He said, after a while, "My eyes don't lie. I'm sold. This is a very solemn occasion."

"Hear, hear!" said Leda. She prowled restlessly about the office. "It's rather like discovering America or something." She smiled happily at Sam. "And we're the discoverers."

Mr. Sharpe struggled back to his feet. "Wait a minute. Don't forget the circumstances under which it — I mean to say *he* — was found. He shows up in a lab where top-secret work is being

done. He gets involved," and here he looked at me apologetically, "with a member of the staff who is shortly going to Los Alamos. Add that up and what have you got?"

"Boy meets girl," said one of the agents. Nobody laughed.

"I'll have to consult Washington," Mr. Sharpe concluded. "I don't even know if we can book him or hold him or what we're supposed to do with him."

Sam spoke quietly. "I can assure you that I have no hidden motives. My arrival was an accident. In fact, if you can find any way to send me back, I'd be most grateful. Tell you the truth, I'm getting a bit homesick."

My heart split down the middle at that.

Leda inclined her head toward him. "You don't mean that," she said. "You've hardly given us a chance."

Give her a chance, I thought bitterly, and I might as well get myself plowed under.

"Well," said Mr. Sharpe, "I'm not going to discuss this one over the phone. This is something that has to be seen. We'll put it on a plane for Washington tonight. We'll see what the Pentagon has to say." He turned toward Sam. "Technically, I don't think we can arrest you. I have to ask you to cooperate."

They planned to take a morning

plane, and they asked if either Leda or Arnold could go along as technical advisor. Leda jumped at the chance. I could see that she would be as close to Sam as clams in chowder the minute they were out of sight. I began to feel slightly manic-depressive.

"What about me?" I said in a small voice.

Mr. Sharpe sighed. "Go home and get some sleep. I'm afraid I'll still have to keep you under surveillance till I get word."

Gently, Arnold said, "Say good-bye to him if it'll make you feel any better."

I went up and shook hands with Sam. It was awful. It was like settling for rabbit when you want a Persian Lamb.

"I know they'll like you," I said. It wasn't exactly eloquent, but I couldn't think of anything else to say. "You'll be all right, won't you?"

"Don't give him a thought, dear," Leda said. It wasn't advice, it was a warning.

Sam was blissfully unaware of the undertow. We stood very close together. Right then, with all those people around us, I felt miraculously transported back to the park we had walked in. It was a bittersweet mood, for we were separated by barriers of space and time and custom. It was like hearing a love song sung in a foreign tongue, or trying to recall a face seen in a crowd. He held

my hands very hard. "Thank you," he said fervently. "Thank you for everything." There was a look in his face which told me he wanted to say more. It was like a torrent held back, dammed up. "I'll call you first thing," he said.

"I'll wait for the call," I said, and on that less than rapturous exchange I stood back while they filed out. I was alone with Arnold.

We were silent a while. I've read plenty of stories where the other man gets sulky and insists on his rights, and I was afraid Arnold might be just cliché enough to do that. After the door closed, though, he just invited me to sit down in a nice, big-brother voice. "You're tired, aren't you?"

I began to feel weepy. I didn't have a Kleenex, either, so I just kept sucking in my breath and hoping it would stop. Arnold saw it and gave me his hankie, something he'd been doing frequently of late. I began to twist it into little knots.

"Arnold," I said, "do you think I'm a heel?"

"You're a little mixed up, that's all," he said quietly.

"You know that I've betrayed you, don't you?" I asked tremulously. "I mean, I didn't do anything, but I certainly thought about it a lot."

It was murky but he seemed to follow me. "Baby," he said, "lean back. . . ."

"I hope you're not going to scold me, or tell me that I'm in the grip of an adolescent emotional trauma, or anything like that." I said it very fast.

"I'm not."

"You see — he belongs to me. He's mine, in a way, because I found him. I'm the one who let him out of there when he wanted to get out. I got him all squared away and I looked after him and I —" I stopped.

"And you fell in love with him." Arnold finished it for me.

"It's terrible. After all, you had a prior claim on me, and you know that I have very high moral standards. But since Sam came, I go around feeling very primitive inside all the time." I swallowed hard. "I can't control it."

His voice was troubled. "Betsy, this is far graver than you think."

"Oh, it's grave all right, I know that."

"Darling," he said, "this *being* — how do you know — how can you tell —" For once he didn't have all the words. It made him seem pathetic, nicer than I'd ever seen him.

I helped out by telling *him*. "I know he's different, and I know *how* he's different. I don't think he can love me at all."

"Then what are you going to do about it?"

"Well, first of all," I said weakly, "I think I'd better break my engagement to you."

He smiled wryly. "Before you get too inevitable about this, shouldn't you keep me in reserve?"

"Arnold — I couldn't do that."

"Why not, if I'm willing?"

"It would be like having a harem," I said. "And it would be awful for you, knowing that I —"

"You don't love me. I don't care about that right now. Betsy, Sam is not for you. He can't be. He never will be. He'll always remain an invader, a stranger. You won't be happy."

"I have to take a chance," I said feverishly. "He might learn to love. When he does — I think it'll be me."

"And if he doesn't?"

"I'll be an old maid," I said, "and do good works."

It sounded very final, the way I said it. Arnold felt it, too. "All right," he said, "but if you ever change your mind — if you need me —"

"You're so sweet," I said. Then I did begin to cry. I know I sound like a very unstable girl, but here was Arnold dedicating himself to me, and there was Sam flying away from me to Washington, and there were agents waiting to watch every move I made. It was just too much.

Arnold gave me a sedative and told me to go home and think about something remote and placid. A book like *Pride and*

Prejudice or *Jane Eyre* will generally calm me when I'm all wrought up, but I wasn't in the mood at all. I went home to Ruthie and she put me to bed. She put a hot water bottle in the bed and sat beside me, making little motherly noises, while I spilled it all out. When I was done I felt a lot better.

"Listen," she said emphatically, "this Leda's not such a hot-shot. Don't worry about her."

"She's a mind expert," I reminded her, "and Sam's very *mental* about everything. If anyone can make contact with him, it's Leda. She's in training," I added dismally.

"Here, honey," she said, "read Jane Austin, and we'll work out something in the morning." She knows about Jane Austin, too.

I tried but it didn't help. I kept thinking of Leda discovering Sam like he was some sort of a peninsula, and planting a flag on him for keeps. I didn't close my eyes until noon the next day.

Love is hell. For the next three days there was an ominous quiet on the Washington front. The papers had a leak regarding a very secret joint session of Congress, but that was all — no details. I went to work and took baths and ate food and everything, but my heart just wasn't in it. By thirty on the third night I was climbing up the walls like a human fly. Ruthie tried to take my

mind off everything by working a giant cross-word puzzle out loud, but it didn't help to have her always asking me what was the Hindu god of fertility.

"They'll deport him!" I said suddenly.

Ruthie put the paper aside. "How?"

"I don't know how. They've got all kinds of things perfected we don't know about. Or suppose they jail him for life."

"He hasn't committed any crime."

"Why doesn't he call? He said he'd call."

Ruthie took my shoulders and forced me onto the couch. "Look — Washington takes time. You can't blame them. He set *us* on our ear and we know him and love him."

"Well, why don't they hurry?" I said irritably. "He's no menace. When I found him he was just like Moses in the bullrushes. He didn't even have any clothes, let alone a secret weapon."

The phone rang then. I made it across the room like an Olympic sprinter. When I picked up the receiver I heard an insane babble of tongues for a minute, and then Sam's voice. He was shouting.

"Betsy!" he cried. "Is that you, Betsy?"

"Sam! Are you all right? Where are you? What are they going to do with you?"

"Fine. I'm fine!" he shouted. "Can you come down to the Waldorf Astoria?"

"Aren't you in Washington?"

"Waldorf Astoria!" he said at the top of his voice.

"I hear you!" I shouted back.

"But what about Washington?"

"Half an hour — the lobby!"

"All right," I said. "I'll be there. Sam, darling —" He had hung up.

I was already shucking off my bathrobe and pajamas and scrambling around for clothes. Ruthie followed me around asking questions. "I don't know anything except he's in town and wants to see me."

"So you're off and running," Ruthie said tartly. "You're turning into a regular little handmaiden."

"I'd like nothing better," I cried. "Anyway, what am I supposed to do? Leave him to Leda!"

"There are cabs. He knows where you live."

"I'm skipping the formalities," I said. "Where's my hat?"

"On your head."

It took me eons to catch a cab. I thought I'd never get there. The Waldorf, lit up at night, looked like Valhalla. A crowd milled about outside the main doors, but I shoved through them. Inside was like roll-back day at Macy's. I thought maybe it was a conven-

tion, until I saw who was in the middle of the crush. There were flash bulbs going off in all directions. There was Sam, dead center, blinking like a horse caught in a barn fire. And there was Leda, directing traffic and loving every minute of it. I got up close enough to hear, but I couldn't catch Sam's eye. I knew right away it was a press conference to end all press conferences.

Leda was talking in her chocality voice. "I can only assume the President was consulted," she was saying. "Yes, Congress sat in an emergency session."

"What was the verdict, Dr. Taylor?"

She got arch. "I'm afraid they wanted all this to be very hush-hush, but it leaked out somehow. Some enterprising young man just happened to get a tip, I don't don't know from whom—" she laughed musically—"and here we are."

"Power of the press," one reporter said laconically. "Tell us—is it really from Saturn?"

"Oh, absolutely."

"Is there a hands-off policy about it among the top brass?"

"Absolutely not. The House Foreign Committee sat for ages. They were perfectly marvelous about everything."

I pushed in closer. By now I could see Sam's face, tired and strained and bewildered. My tem-

per rose like the thermometer in August.

"One point," said Leda. "They wanted it kept secret because they were deathly afraid of a panic."

"Why?" asked a young man with heavy glasses. "Is it a danger—part of an invasion?"

"Really!" said Leda in mock outrage. "That's bizarre, it really is."

"You know all about it, then?"

"I was the consulting psychiatrist. No, what I started to say was that Washington felt it would be best if he had a private identity—if he were integrated into American life." She paused, her face solemn. "After all," she said, "our country has always benefited by the absorption of other cultures. This one is no exception." She made a dramatic gesture toward Sam, who looked down at the floor sort of uneasily. "Personally," she went on, "I feel that it would be a great shame to have him simply lost in the scuffle. The preservation of the unique is also important culturally and sociologically. So, in the public interest, I have booked him for a country-wide tour."

"Under your management?"

"More or less." She smiled modestly. "As I said, I consider it a public service. Give me some play on that, boys."

"It'll do more for you than sex for Kinsey," said one reporter. "Where are you going to exhibit

it? Honestly, I can hardly wait."

Her voice frosted slightly. "He's not a side-show attraction."

"That's how it'll end up, Doc. Just run a line on a Man from Saturn, and you'll have your side-show."

"I'm presenting him to the public as an envoy without portfolio — an ambassador from another world."

"Can we talk to it?"

"He's very tired. You can put whatever questions you like to me."

I put a question — right then and there. "Just where the hell do you think you get off at?" I screamed.

But it was drowned in the din. The crowd pushed me back against the wall. I saw it was hopeless, so I took out a pencil and wrote a note on the inside of a gum wrapper. I gave it to a bell-boy with two dollars. "Get that to him, will you? It's terribly important."

"You starting a fan club?" He glanced at Sam.

"Please!"

"I don't think I can get through, lady."

"Please try. It's important."

He pocketed the tip and then bucked the line, but in a minute he was cut off from view. I waited and waited. The noise had subsided again and the questions went on.

"Where's it staying?"

"That's not important, is it?"

"Like to interview its landlady, that's all."

They kept calling Sam it. They wanted to know what it ate and if it was going on television and if it thought like a man and did it like girls. Then Leda held up her hands.

"Boys," she said, "you've been wonderful, but we're both terribly exhausted. As you know, Grover Whalen has named Saturday as Saturn Day — and as our activities will be centered in New York for the time being, you can call on us any time. Goodnight and thank you."

As she spoke, a couple of door-men came up and reinforced the police; they held the crowds back as Leda and Sam swept right past me and out into the night. I ran like a crazy fool, but when I got to the door I saw their hired car pulling away, and he was gone.

My spirits were low, as black as India Ink. I couldn't face the thought of going home and thinking about Leda leading Sam around by the nose, and yet I didn't want to be by myself. So I called up Arnold and asked if he'd see me in his professional capacity. He said to come right over and wait for him, so I did. When he came upstairs he had a little paper sack with a carton of cocoa in it as a sort of relaxer, and he led me into the office and

tucked me into a chair like a mother hen. I told him everything that had happened and asked him what in heaven's name I was going to do.

"You know how smart Leda is. She'll figure out about contacting his mind, and before you know it they'll be taking a walk. She's just exploiting him for all he's worth."

"Drink your cocoa," Arnold said.

"I don't even like cocoa anymore," I said dismally. "Sam called me up. He wanted to see me."

"Listen, Betsy," Arnold said sternly, "face facts. If he wants to see you, really wants to in his heart, then he'll do it."

"How can he?" I wailed. "You should have seen her. She's got him tied in a sack. Her and her tours and her Grover Whalens!" I put down my cup. "Couldn't you do something? I mean, tell her that her behavior is unethical or predatory or something?"

"Leda is immensely attracted to him."

"She's just building a better mousetrap," I said. "With poor Sam the cheese."

"I don't deny it."

"Well . . . thanks very much, Arnold. Send me a bill. I mean it."

"For what?"

"Shoulder room."

He wanted to take me home, but I told him I'd rather be

alone. I walked all the way to our apartment, and by the time I got there I had made up my mind. The first chance I got I'd go tell Leda she was jumping my claim and that she'd better leave Sam's mind alone. The trouble was that chance was a long time coming. What happened next makes the Festival of Britain look like a church bazaar.

First of all it was Saturn Day in New York. I planned to stay home with a sick headache. I didn't want to see Sam driven through the streets with Leda at his side, like an Egyptian princess bringing home a captive. So I stayed home. I got out all the stockings I'm supposed to sort and mend but never do, and began to sort and mend them. It was about noon and I decided I wasn't going to eat any lunch. I was just going to sort and mend and not think about anything or anybody. Then the phone rang.

I picked up the receiver. It sounded like Yankee Stadium during the World Series, but very faintly I could make out Sam's voice against the clamor.

"Betsy!" he shouted, "is that you?"

"Sam," I said joyfully. "Oh, Sam!"

"I'd like to—" The roaring noises surged up and I couldn't hear him. But I took a chance. "So would I, Sam!" I shouted into the small mouthpiece. "SO

WOULD IT?" The noises came pounding through like a wave. "Sam, are you still there?"

"I'm at City Hall. They're going to give me a key. Can you meet me at —"

We were cut off. I almost jiggled the phone to pieces, but the line was dead.

I couldn't get back to him, and I knew that by the time I could get to City Hall he'd be gone. That afternoon, when Ruthie got home, she was all out of breath.

"I saw him," she said. "He was all over ticker tape."

"Does he look healthy?" I asked plaintively.

"Thriving."

"Oh . . ."

"You can see for yourself if you want to. He's going to be on Faye Emerson's show tonight. I asked the landlady if we could come down and see, and she said yes. Want to?"

Of course I wanted to. Miss Emerson was very nice to him, but Leda did all the talking for everyone. She told how New York had taken Sam to its heart, and how Governor Dewey had invited him to dinner, and how Howard Hawks had wired to say he wanted to make a movie about him called "The *Real* Thing," and how thrilled she was to be such a close friend and companion of his. In the middle of the commercial I heard our phone ring upstairs. I ran up them two at a time and

caught it just in time. Sam sounded as though he were in a bottle again. His voice was all muffled and vague.

"Betsy," he said, "I've just got a minute —"

"Sam, where are you?"

"Radio City . . . yes," I heard him say to someone else, "coming. Have to go, Betsy. I'll call you."

The line went dead. And that was that.

In most love stories, something melodramatic or contrived generally happens which throws the lovers back into each other's arms when the hassle is over. The girl is dying and the boy hears about it; or the other man says "Don't be a little fool," which makes the girl suddenly see the light; or the big Misunderstanding is clarified in the nick of time. My trouble is I'd read too many of those stories, so that way in the back of my head a tiny hope kept winking that one of these might happen to me. The girl dying was the one I was actually closest to, because I *was* dying for Sam, steadily and in little pieces. But it didn't do any good. I just didn't hear from him anymore. Oh, I followed his life in the newspapers; I saw that he'd been in a fight in the Stork Club and some damn man had hit him; I saw a picture of him and Leda in the Sunday supplement, all teeth; and he hit

the cover of *Life*; but it was all very remote and second-hand.

By then most girls would have counted themselves out of the running, but in any discussion of me it must be remembered that I come from Pennsylvania Dutch, a very stubborn stock. That's why I did what I did.

First, though, I went to Henri Bendel and bought myself a thirty-two fifty hat. It was strawberry soda pink with lots of hyacinth blossoms and dangly ribbons. It was a hat that any woman who saw it would know that it cost thirty-two fifty. Then I asked Ruthie if she could get the fur coat. This fur coat belongs to her cousin, who lives in a very swanky apartment on Madison Avenue. About twice a year Ruthie borrows it when she wants to make a splash for some reason. She'd only had it once this year to go to the opening of *Guys and Dolls*, so she thought she could get it again.

"But why?" she asked.

"Well," I said, "you know that gray coat that *Vogue* says business girls can wear over everything?"

"What about it?"

"Just that. It *looks* like a gray coat that a business girl can wear over everything. I've got to have something posh."

"Would Sam know the difference?"

"No — but Leda would."

"Betsy, what are you up to?"

"Just get me the coat," I said, beginning to be nervous. "That's all."

She didn't say another word, but that night when I got home the coat was hanging up in one of those cellophane envelopes in our closet. It was gorgeous, and since I'm moody and sensitive about clothes anyway, it stimulated me into action right then. I called up Leda.

I didn't tell her who I was because I knew she'd stall me, so I talked in a very tired Upper New York State voice, and told her that *Vogue* wanted a picture of her at home and could they send an interviewer. Her voice was as smooth as cold cream. She'd love it. She'd be in at the cocktail hour. I had to be sure Sam wouldn't be there, so I asked to see her alone. She agreed.

I got there around five. Leda lives in a two-room apartment, but everything is custom made. It's all gray and gold and very abstract. To be honest, I don't think she was too surprised that it was me. She looked rather superior and amused, as if I'd done something extraordinary for a five-year-old.

"My dear child," she said. "Come in."

I suppose the my dear child was calculated to put me in the minor leagues, but she underestimated both the mink coat and my pas-

sion. I accepted a chair and a cigarette. She poured sherry for both of us. I hate the taste of it, but I held the glass in my hand for a while. She kept looking at me warily, and then she set her glass down with a little click and smiled. It was meant as a tolerant smile; but it didn't come off.

"It must be terribly important. I mean all this Trojan Horse business to see me alone."

I had intended to be very brittle and dry and cutting, but suddenly I wanted to kick her and throw sherry all over her silly, kidney-shaped furniture. It was childish, I know, but all I could think of was how she was exploiting my Sam.

"Listen, Leda," I said, "I can't think of anything Noel Cowardish to say to you, so I'll get right to it. I don't like you or your sherry or what you're doing to the man I happen to love. He's so groggy from being pinched and analyzed and photographed and clucked over and torn to pieces in screaming mobs that he doesn't know what's hit him. He'll end up some kind of a crazy comic book character. They'll be putting his picture in cereal boxes, but that's all right with you. You've made such a monkey out of him that all he needs now is a little red hat and a tambourine."

I stopped long enough to breathe and to struggle out of the coat. It made me feel free and

like myself again. "Furthermore," I said, "you're trying to make time with him. I don't know as much as you do about Freud, but I don't have to. Sam has a very complicated libido, and I'm the only one who knows how it works."

"Dear, foolish Betsy," she said. "Libidos are my business." She paused. The silence had a momentous quality. "Sam and I have taken a walk." She put her hands out in a 'what more is there to say' gesture.

I froze in my chair. "What did you say?"

"Sam — and — I — have — taken — a walk." She repeated it deliberately, enjoying every word. "We made contact. It was a new emotional experience. Quite thrilling. I felt like an explorer. I really did."

I sat before her stunned, and she plowed right on. "You have to be very delicately attuned," she said. "One might say it's a kind of emotional and intellectual radar."

"Stop it!" I said. "I don't want to hear anymore."

I managed to get to my feet. "There's just one thing," I quavered. "Why did he go along with you on this publicity wing-ding? He was happy out of the spotlight, before you came along."

"You're really incredibly naive, Betsy. It was simple. I explained money to him."

I had heard enough. "Tell him I wish him every happiness," I said, and went out.

I don't know how I ever got home. I suppose I was taking the whole thing awfully big, but consider the circumstances. This hadn't been any tired old romance. Nobody could say, 'That's just the way I met Harry,' or, 'Isn't that funny, the same thing happened to me.' Sam had fallen to me from a star. He had come to me on Valentine's Day. The whole thing had been a fairy tale, except the witch ended up getting him.

Ruthie had gone to a double feature, and I was glad. I wanted to be alone to blot up my psyche. Not that pride means anything to me—I just didn't think it would be fair to Ruthie if she had to room with somebody who was always 'wan and paley loitering.' I didn't even turn on the lights. I always sit in the dark when I'm being introverted. Only it wasn't dark. I was aware, with a suddenly tingling spine, of a light, a faint green light.

"Betsy," he said. "Don't be afraid. It's me. Sam."

I felt like laughing out loud. Who else do I know who lights up the sky?

"Hello," I said. Then I couldn't think of anything else at all.

"I've been here a long time."

"I was out," I said inanely.

There was a long silence. "Could we have the light on?" Sam said. "I'd like to see your face."

"Same old face," I said flip-pantly, only my voice was solemn.

"Please."

I snapped on the light. I knew I looked fine in the thirty-two fifty hat, so I didn't mind.

He stared at me. "Betsy," he said, and then again, "Betsy . . ."

His face seemed different, but I didn't look at him much.

"How have you been?" I asked lamely.

"It's a long story," he said. "Will you listen?" Listen! He could have told me *War and Peace* and I would have listened. I sat down on a chair across the room from him and waited. He said, "You're too far away."

"I'm trying to get a little perspective," I told him shakily. "I'd better stay here."

"That hat," he said at last, tentatively. "Nice."

I dropped my eyes. I felt he was getting off on the wrong foot, engaged as he was to Leda. I decided to tell him so. Unhappily, I said, "Do you think you ought to be paying me compliments—under the circumstances?"

"Yes. Of course." The way he said it you'd think I was being unreasonable. I began to get confused, so I threw down the gauntlet.

I said, quite formally, "I happen to know about your recent engagement to that eminent medical pioneer."

"My what?" And he blushed slightly. What with the faint greenish cast of his skin and the scarlet of the blush, he looked very Christmasy and exotic.

"I understand you went for a walk. Your fiancée inferred that it was as electrical as Times Square. Not that I'm probing or anything," I said with dignity, "it's really none of my business, except that you're here talking about my hat and all in such a personal way."

"But I want to," he protested. "I want to talk about that and more."

"I don't see —"

"Of course you don't! I've just begun to myself. Betsy —"

"Yes?"

"I know about love!" he said triumphantly. "Real, human love. Your kind."

"I'm sure the object of it is very gratified."

"You don't seem very happy. . . ."

My eyes widened with anger. "What do you think I am? Why should I be happy because you and Leda act like high tension wires?"

"Leda? What's she got to do with it?"

"I've seen Leda," I said coldly, "and she gave me a shock by

shock account. She left out the real, human part, and I'd just as soon let it go at that, if you don't mind."

"You don't understand," he said gravely.

"No, I don't. However, *chacun a son gout*, if you understand French." I stood up. "I don't care to talk about it anymore. I hope you'll enjoy yourself and everything, but I don't want to talk about it."

Slowly he said, "Leda lied to you. We did take a walk, she insisted on it, but nothing happened. Not even an erg."

"An erg?"

"It's a unit of energy. Not even that with Leda."

"You mean," I asked, swallowing, "you had ergs with me?"

He was across the room in a flash and I felt myself pulled in close to him. Then he kissed me. Maybe you remember the old Gilbert-Garbo pictures. That was us. Then he looked down at me. From his great height he was as towering and majestic as the Matterhorn. "Just like a Sherman tank," he said huskily.

In big, dramatic love scenes everyone is always so articulate. I was down for the count. He helped me to a chair. "My own true love," he said quietly, sitting down beside me. I know it's a pretty archaic expression, but tears came to my eyes.

"Me?" I quavered. "How come?" And then, as a startled afterthought. "*You!* How come?"

"I've read a lot of your books, and heard a lot of your love songs. They don't seem to have many ways of putting it." He paused, as if he were looking for the way.

"Love," he said.

He was groping a bit, but I could tell immediately that he had it. "It's like that ride we took in the elevator. . . ." he began.

"You mean smooth and sinky," I said.

He nodded. "And that chocolate soda. You don't have to have it, but . . ."

I helped him out. "It's more fun when you do."

He nodded again. "You remember that UN meeting?"

"Yes. They were talking about aid to India."

"That's right. It's like that, too. It's help when you need it." He paused slightly. "And that place where we danced."

"Everyone stood close together."

"Yes . . . close together . . ."

"What else?" I asked dreamily.

"It feels the same as it did the day you gave me all my clothes, and we laughed about it together. Only it feels that way all the time — not just for one day."

"More, Sam," I murmured.

"It's like the time you kissed me."

"Oh . . ."

"It's like making sense out of ink blots. It does things inside you like Arnold's wine. It's like your hat — very pretty. It makes any place home — even a park bench. It's taking a walk. It's contact." He was getting wound up now, and I didn't interrupt anymore. He didn't need any more help. "It's you, Betsy. Everything you showed me, everything you are. It means a vacuum being away from you. It means needing you, just having to have you. It means looking the same on the outside, having two arms and two legs, but not being the same at all, missing something, a part that makes you go; without it, nothing works right anymore." He paused then a moment. "I couldn't feel anything like this before — because I never had anything like it in my life before. But now I've got to have it. Got to have you. . . ."

A silence fell. If I hadn't been brought up in a strictly middle-class environment, I might have asked him what I knew I'd have to ask him sooner or later. I just couldn't do it right then. He'd learned what love was like now, there wasn't any doubt of that. But did he know what to do about it? Did he? Could he?

Well, I thought, I'd worry about that later. The important thing was that he was able to feel, to react; that he had an

emotional life, fresh and shiny.

When I first learned to ride a bicycle I wanted to do it all the time. That's the way Sam was about love. We sat close together for hours and hours, holding hands. Finally he straightened up abruptly.

"We'll get married," he said.

"Oh, you know about that, too."

"There's a place out of state. We can be married before morning. We'll take a cab."

"It's too expensive," I said.

He pulled out a wad of bills. "Leda explained money. That's why I did those silly things with her — I realized how much you'd spent on me, and I wanted to give it back. Is this enough?"

"More than enough." I tried to move away from him so I could say what I had to say without being befuddled.

"Sam," I said, "marriage is a very serious step."

His face was against my ear. "Let's take it."

"It has many ramifications. . . ."

"Betsy . . . Betsy . . . Oh, Betsy . . ."

"All right," I said suddenly.

"I think we'd probably better."

And that's the end of the story. We drove all night and ended up in a wonderfully musty-looking little parlor, being married by a sleep-rumpled Justice of the Peace. Afterwards, he directed us to a hotel in the village.

I guess my feelings were the same as any bride's — except for one detail. Sam kissed me tenderly and went off into the bathroom to put on his pajamas, leaving me alone in the darkness with my thoughts. I had them to think about. All Arnold had ever said to me about compatibility and harmonious relationships whirled through my head. Certain doubts began to assail me. After all. How could I be sure of being harmonious if . . . But I was worrying about nothing at all. Quite suddenly, I began to smile to myself. I knew I no longer had anything to fear. Sam's voice came from the bathroom, Sam's voice raised in song, in lilting, serene song:

Folks are dumb

Where I come from,

They don't have no yearning.

Now I'm happy as can be,

Doing what comes naturally!



YOUR face gets more radiation when you get your teeth X-rayed than it would receive over a period of a year if you worked in one of the plants operated for the Atomic Energy Commission.

— Edward J. Kehoe, AEC

SO WISE — SO YOUNG

(Continued from page 107)

It was after midnight and the late moon just now showing over the tall buildings to the east, when the door to my room opened softly and Mom came in.

I heard her but I didn't turn from the window. There was the soft click of the latch as she closed the door, the soft whisper of her slippered feet across the carpet, her hand, gently, on my arm.

"Ben, Go to bed, Ben." Her voice was pleading.

I didn't move. I stood rigid, braced against the strong assault of her love, her concern, drew deeply on the stub of my cigarette and stared at the moon. After a while the sweet pressure grew too great to bear and I said, "All right. I'm sorry, Mom."

"Oh, Ben. Stop fighting. We've all been hurt enough — you and Jerry and I. Stop it now. You can't change it, Ben; it's a thing that's done. Try to live with it. Nothing is too terrible once you accept it. That, I've learned."

I flipped the cigarette out into the night and turned from the window. "The fool!" I said. "The stubborn fool!"

"No, Ben." She sat on the edge of my bed and spoke calmly. "Jerry's no fool. He's very young, that's true. But he's very wise."

"Wise!"

"Yes, Ben, wise. Jerry has his dream, Ben, a very youthful dream, but true for him — and rather wonderful. And he's wise enough to know that the man who denies his dream, in some way dies a little. It's a wisdom of the very young, Ben, and comes from the heart, not the head. But it's no less true."

"So wise so young," I murmured.

"What, Ben?"

"Nothing. Nothing, Mom. Just a quotation from an old, old play." *So wise so young, they say, do never live long.* No! I sat on the floor, me with my thirty-one years, and put my head in her lap. Long-remembered fragrance enveloped me and her comforting warmth and suddenly I was very tired.

"Mom," I said. "Does he think he's the only one who ever dreamed? What can a man do when his dream is out of reach? How does he follow his shining dream when the path is blocked?"

"I know, Ben." Her hand stroked across my hair. "Did you think I didn't know? Did you think I never saw your face when the rocketships went over? Did you think I couldn't read the hunger in your eyes when you looked at Jerry in his uniform?"

"Mom. No, Mom, I never —"

"Of course you did, Ben. You couldn't help resenting us sometimes. Times when you knew that we, Jerry and I, were what stood between you and your dream. But you swallowed your resentment

and went on giving. Don't be ashamed of it, Ben. Be proud!"

"I —" My throat closed up.

"Listen, Ben." Her hands closed gently on my face and turned it up to hers. In the dim light her face was pale, her eyes darkly glistening, but she was smiling. "Remember this. Whatever Jerry may make of his dream, whatever of honor or glory comes to him, it is of your giving. In the frustration of your dream was the flowering of his. Take your fair share of it, Ben, and be proud. He's a wonderful boy you've made." Her hands trembled suddenly against my cheeks and her voice broke.

"But — but he's so young!"

I held her in my arms for a long time while she cried silently, and I knew it was for my dream as much as for Jerry. My face was turned to the window, and the far-off pale orb of the moon glinted strangely through the tears in my own eyes. "All right, kid," I whispered. "We'll try it again. We can't be wrong forever."

The door opened and Jerry stood there, looking very young in his pajamas. "Ben," he said, "I couldn't sleep."

"Come on in, boy," I said. "Join the party."

I felt fine again.

I, DREAMER

(Continued from page 29)

"No more, Clicker!"

"And I will sleep forever?"

"Forever!"

"And dream!"

"I'll dream with you, Clicker."

She went back to fix the reactor.

I took a last look at the loveli-

ness of space and the stars. It is hard to give this up. But I would rather be a TwoLegs, even if only in a dream.

"Now, Clicker!"

My rockets spoke, and there was thunder through the ship. And we went down, while Janna sang the song she taught me. I feel joy; soon I shall dream.

THE DAY THE GODS FELL

(Continued from page 71)

Dorn turned to look up at the mighty Faces, dim now on the mountainside under a pale moon. And as he looked, his courage and his happiness came back. He was a

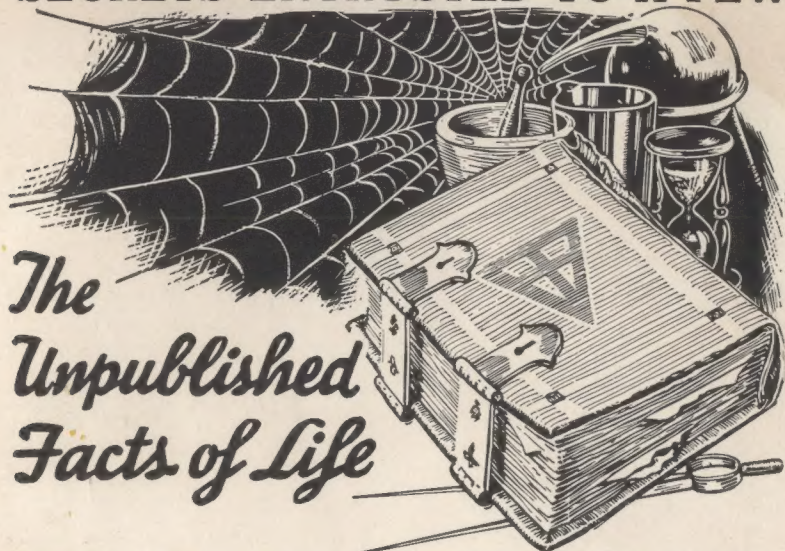
Sodakan! Soon he would mate and fight his tribe's enemies.

"Of course they were Gods," he whispered. "Only The Gods could carve such giant images in the granite."

Now he smiled and looked up among the stars.

Where The Gods had gone.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Fitting | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics | <input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Fireman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine and Book | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> RADIO, TELEVISION, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrician | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Good English | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning | <input type="checkbox"/> BUSINESS | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL | <input type="checkbox"/> General Radio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card and Sign Lettering | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> AND SHOP | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Operation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion Illustrating | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Public Accountant | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management—FM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOTIVE | <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Television |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile, Mechanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Supervision | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto-Elec. Technician | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Foremanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Body Rebuilding | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial | <input type="checkbox"/> DRAFTING | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> RAILROAD |
| <input type="checkbox"/> and Refinishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Tax | <input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel—Gas Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Locomotive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AVIATION | <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel and Labor Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Inspection | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Administration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aeronautical Engineering Jr. | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> TEXTILE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft Engine Mechanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Engineering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airplane Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing Small Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Gas—Electric Welding | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Mine Surveying and Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment—Metallurgy | <input type="checkbox"/> Rayon Manufacture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arch. Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Loom Fixing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Contractor | <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMISTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> Finishing and Dyeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Estimating | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> POWER | <input type="checkbox"/> HOME ARTS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter and Mill Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical Chemistry | <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Power and Light | <input type="checkbox"/> Combustion Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Dressmaking and Designing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Petroleum—NAT'l Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> Lineman | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel—Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> Cookery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Pulp and Paper Making | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH SCHOOL | <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Light and Power | <input type="checkbox"/> Tea Room Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> House Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastics | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing | | | | |

Name _____ Age _____ Home Address _____
City _____ State _____ Working Hours _____ A.M. to _____ P.M.
Occupation _____

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